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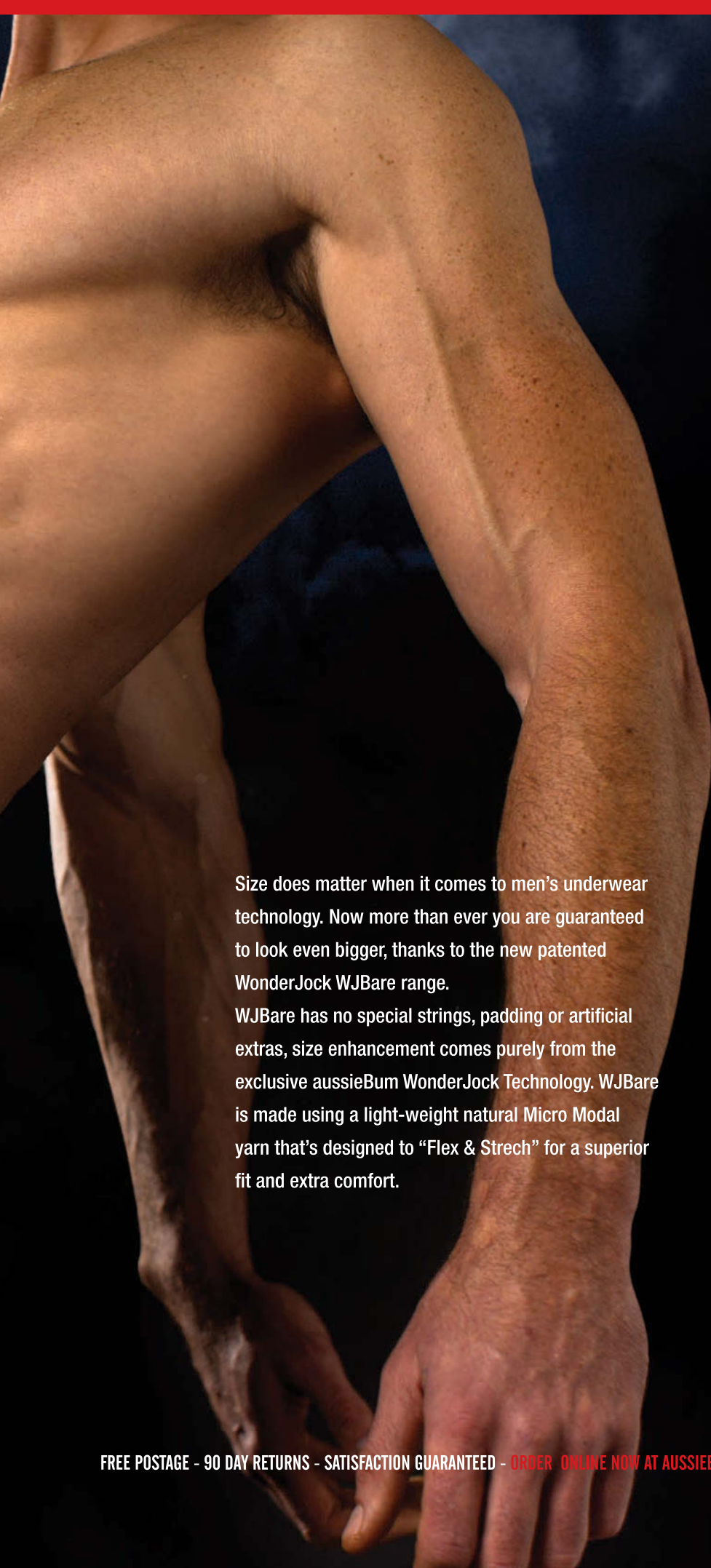
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[12/14]

# jingle balls

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## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



"This is definitely my most favourite time of year..." So proclaimed Emma Bunton in the opening line of that seminal Spice Girls classic, Sleigh Ride. Younger gays – the Spice Girls were "a

big deal" before they presented radio shows/judged 'talent' contents. I digress. Christmas is definitely my most favourite time of year too. And not just because it's my birthday five days before. IT'S NOT ALL ABOUT YOU, MISS JESUS. I love Christmas. I'm not at all religious – you might just have realised that – and I'm not normally a, how shall we say, 'festive' person. But there's just something about the build up to Christmas that really makes me happy. And people usually expect me to be more Grinch-like. Just goes to show that you can't judge a book by its cover. Unless it's this 'book'! Well, of course I had to make it camp as Christmas... Sadly there's only one man waking up to Kieron Richardson on Christmas morning, and that's his fiancé, as we discover on the eve of both his real life marriage, and his on-screen marriage to John Paul in Hollyoaks. We're in the episode on Christmas Eve too... And what's Christmas without a new calendar? We've got exclusive shoots with the Warwick Rowers and the Red Hot cover star, as well as Shayne Ward wet and in practically nothing. Fancy a book? Out footballer Robbie Rogers chats to us about his new autobiography. Whoops, his shirt fell off. Merry Christmas. Or some music? Look no further than Nick Jonas. Whoops, his shirt fell off too. Merry Christmas INDEED. I'll leave the last word on the festive season to Posh Spice, from that same song... "Well what I say this Christmas is just do what you want, but make sure you do it like a lady!" ■

Darren Scott @darren\_scott

NEXT ISSUE  
ON SALE  
CHRISTMAS  
EVE



GT440 DECEMBER 2014

COVER IMAGE LEE ROBERTS



[12/14]

# *fitty at the front*

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**Darren McMullen is the Scottish born, LA living host of Australia's The Voice. He's a friend of Kylie, shortlisted for GQ's Man of the Year and now he's got his kit off for GT**

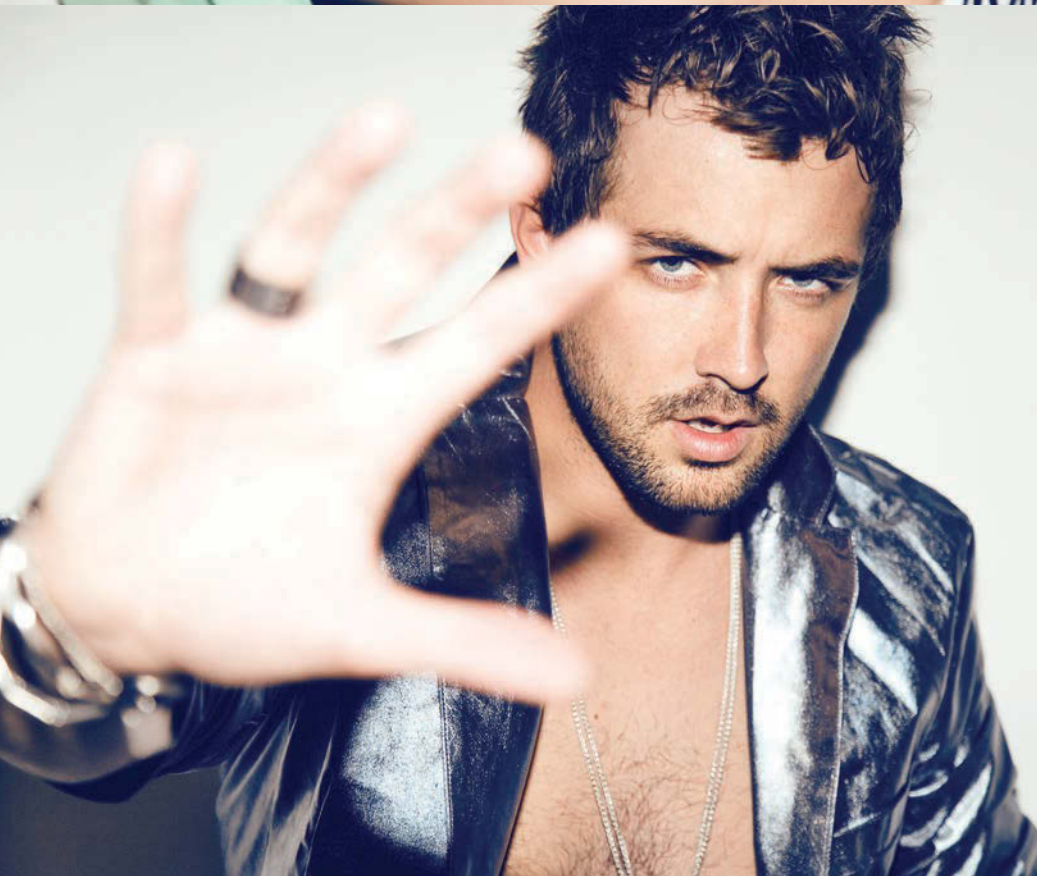
WORDS BENJAMIN BUTTERWORTH

**Describe the pants you're wearing today.** White Calvins. You can't go wrong with a nice pair of box-fresh white Calvins.

**What's the naughtiest thing you've done this week?** I let a woman put a studded collar and a lead on me, and walk me around New York on all fours while I barked like a dog. That woman was Cruella de Vil and I was an unfortunate little dalmatian. Halloween in NYC is always a blast!

**Are you good at flirting?** I'd like to think that I'm a charming man. That's all flirting is essentially – being charming. I flirt with everyone, not just people I want to sleep with.

**What's the worst job you've ever had?** God, hard to say. I've had some pretty awful jobs over the years but I don't regret any of them. They all made me who I am today. I've been a janitor in a high



school. I've cleaned toilets, packed shelves in a supermarket. Been a checkout chick, a car valet parker. I've worked in house-keeping for major hotel chains, a door-to-door salesman... To name but a few!

**Where's the weirdest place**

**you've snogged someone?** I was on a long distance bus once from Sydney to Melbourne in Australia. It's about a 13 hour bus trip. They make a couple of stops along the way and I got quite chatty with another passenger. By the end of the trip we were rolling around at the back of the bus on top of everyone's luggage.

**What's your guilty pleasure?**

Broadway musicals. Love 'em. I'm obsessed with Disney. I'll launch into Disney tunes at least a couple of times a day. A Whole New World is my go-to karaoke song.

**Who's your favourite boy band**

**in history?** It has to be the original and, in my opinion, still the best: The Beatles!

**If you could have any super**

**power, what would it be?** I'd love to be able to become someone else for a day. That way I could have become Peter Andre all those years ago and made him decide not to go onto I'm A Celebrity, and the world would've been saved a decade of television and trash-mag dribble.

**If you were to marry a man,**

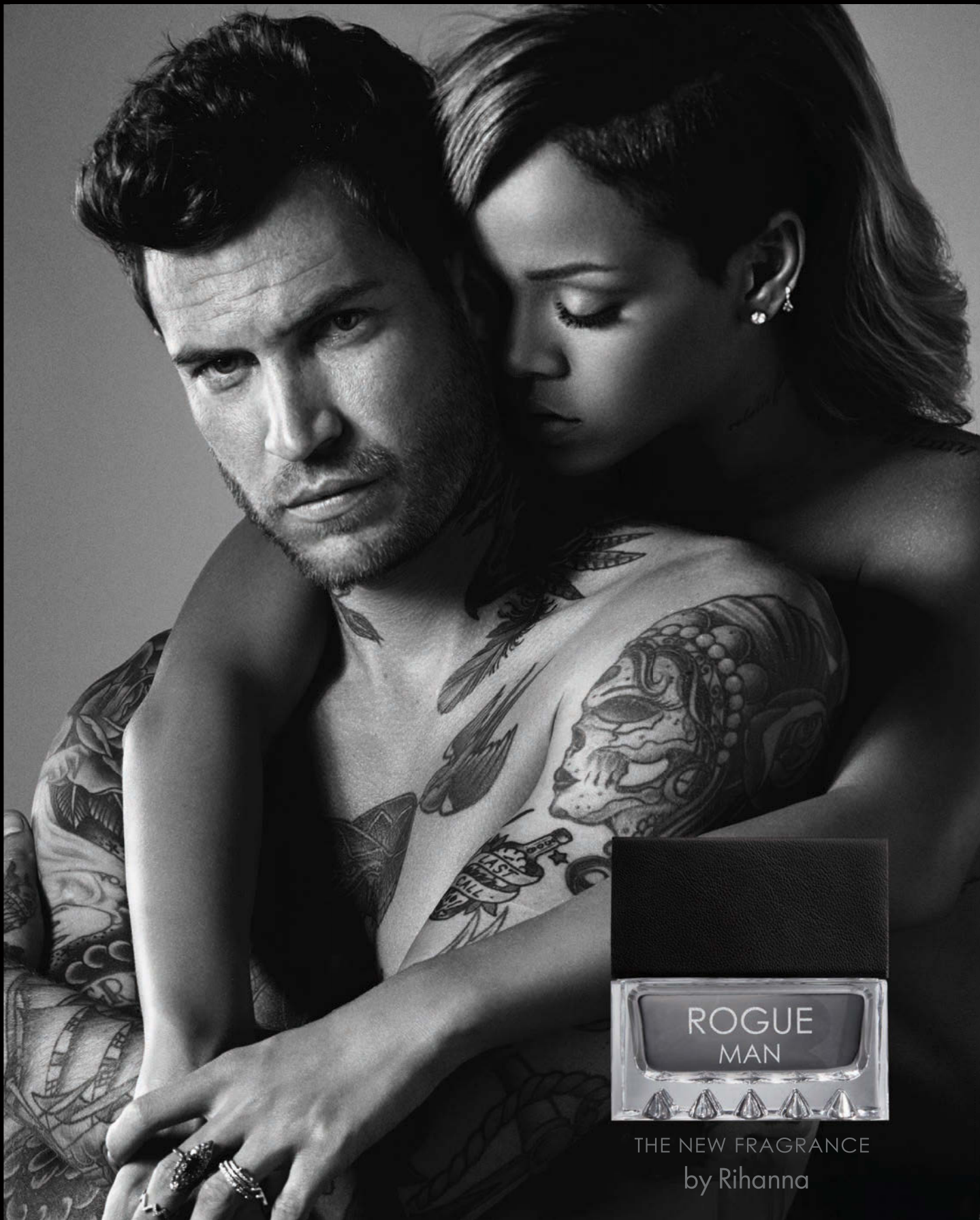
**who would you go for?** It would have to be Georgie Boy... NOT Boy George! I mean Mr Clooney of course... Although I hear that he's been taken!

**What's the most outrageous lie**

**you've gotten away with?** I've been pretending I actually know what the hell is going on at work for years! To be honest, I keep waiting for someone to tap me on the shoulder and say "the game's up pal, we know you're a fake." And it'll be back to cleaning toilets for me... ■

@darrenmcmullen





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[12/14] *bear with us...*

# TOY BOY

...and he's definitely a boy, as Jeremy Scott told us himself.

But this bear in funky packaging really is no toy – he's the first unisex fragrance from the designer for Moschino.

So in demand, it sold out online before anyone even got a whiff of the woody/floral eau de toilette – which Jeremy tells us he's giving to Miley Cyrus for her birthday.

Truly a bear necessity. ■

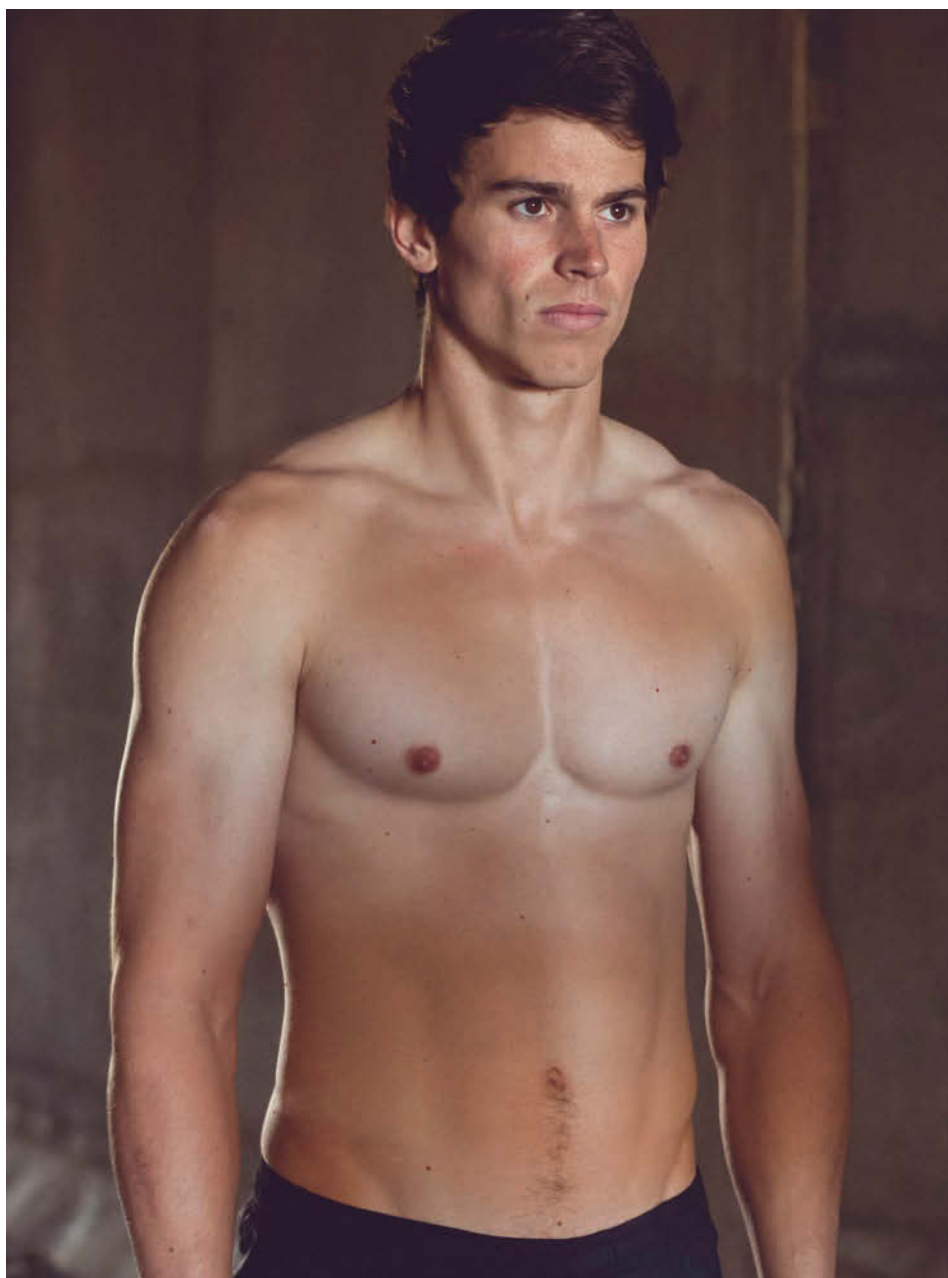
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**Gin-gle bells** Those clever folk at Tanqueray No TEN have come up with their own warming winter twist – especially for Christmas. Mix 35ml of Tanqueray with 15ml of fresh lemon juice, 15ml of simple syrup and three dashes of bitters. Top up with three dashes of hot apple cider. Guaranteed to warm ya cockles in the cold. Tanqueray No TEN from £32.90, [alexanderandjames.com](http://alexanderandjames.com)







## CHAMPION!

**Extremely buff men competing in very masculine activities?**

**In not many clothes? Overseen by rugby's Nick Youngquest?**

**Why of COURSE you've got our attention, Paco Rabanne, with your Invictus Awards...**

Italy's Roberto was crowned the winner of the award's second season in Paris recently. We were there, cheering all seven competitors on and not at all lusting after – or indeed stealing – the many photographs of them that adorned the walls of YoYo.

You can enter to compete for season three at [pacorabanne.com](http://pacorabanne.com) now – which is also where you can see more pictures and videos from season two. Hubba. ■

## SPEED DATE



**Until 2015**  
Is there anything more Christmassy than a man with scissors for hands? Based on the classic Tim Burton film, the theatrical revival of Edward Scissorhands is touring the UK now until March. See local listings. ■

**Until 21 Dec**  
Manchester's Christmas markets are renowned, with German markets bigger than Germany's. This year Lady Gaga's favourite Manchester outlet, Afflecks, is to open shop with its own brand of Christmas funk. [christmas-markets.com](http://christmas-markets.com). ■

**Until 2015**  
Memphis the Musical is set to storm the West End. Starring Beverley Knight and Killian Donnelly, it tells the story of a white guy convinced he can break into 'black' soul music. All singin', all dancin' fun. [memphisthemusical.com](http://memphisthemusical.com). ■

**Dates up to 8 Jan**  
The Royal Vauxhall Tavern is to host its own take on panto, starring GT's own Harry Clayton-Wright. Jack – Sissy That Stalk asks whether Jack will ever be the man Jill wants (doubtful) and will the cow ever produce milk? [rvt.org.uk](http://rvt.org.uk). ■

**1 Dec**  
The Brighton Gay Men's Chorus, among others, is to host a special concert for World AIDS Day. The annual fundraiser, We All Live Together, takes place at St Mary's Church and there'll even be mulled wine. [brightonwad-concert.info](http://brightonwad-concert.info). ■



**“** Oh, my beautiful Blighty. You've managed to blow my... mind – A HA! – once again. The second instalment of the 2014 #EuroVisageTourage has come to a close and, as you read this, I'm already pining for my UK loves! You can't keep me away. I seriously need to get a dual citizenship as I've fallen even further in love with your fair country. I had such fun and I want to thank you all for coming out to see me. Winter weather in the UK is NOT FUN, but my babies weathered the elements and came to snuggle in my bosom once again. I'd literally just disembarked from the first Drag Stars at Sea cruise the day before my first UK date and I'm already packing my bags to board the next. Don't worry, though, you can join me next year if you missed out.

Are you all ready for the festive season? My return to the UK couldn't have come at a better time so I could get my daughters some fun treats that I couldn't

get back home in the US. I think I may have single handedly boosted the UK economy in the run up to Christmas. You're welcome, Primark...

I can already sense the build up in antici...pation – sorry, I sometimes switch back into Rocky Horror mode without warning, I just finished playing Riff Raff in a production of the RHS in Texas, after all – for the new season of RuPaul's Drag Race. I know a lot of you have been waiting for the next instalment since we crowned Bianca, but NOW is the time to start getting excited. It's not long until we announce the new bitches on the block. Oh, and there are a few surprises along the way, so prepare yourselves for another amazing season. Put it this way, I'm just as excited to see season seven as you are!

So until next time, visit my official site, [michellevisage.com](http://michellevisage.com), or hit me up on Twitter – @michellevisage. **”**  
XXX MV ■

## The top three T with Michelle V

01

### Raw walnut butter

Instead of toxic peanuts. Find it, try it, smear it on an apple. You're welcome.



02

### Nighty Night

How did I just learn about it? And more importantly, WHY is Julia Davis not the Queen? #TeamGlen

03

### Pine or balsam scented candles

Year round, they're my favourite scent. But right now is perfection with holiday season upon us! Light 'em up!



**Dear Michelle** What would be your ultimate Broadway or West End show to land a part in? #askvisageanything @nicolebock9 AND @dragaholicDeb – you both asked!

**Here's the deal.** I'm a Broadway baby, so there are MANY dream roles, but above them all, I'd have to go with **Mama Rose in Gypsy.** Hello boys, here's mama! ■

**SNAP SHOT!**



Opening night of Rocky Horror in Texas!



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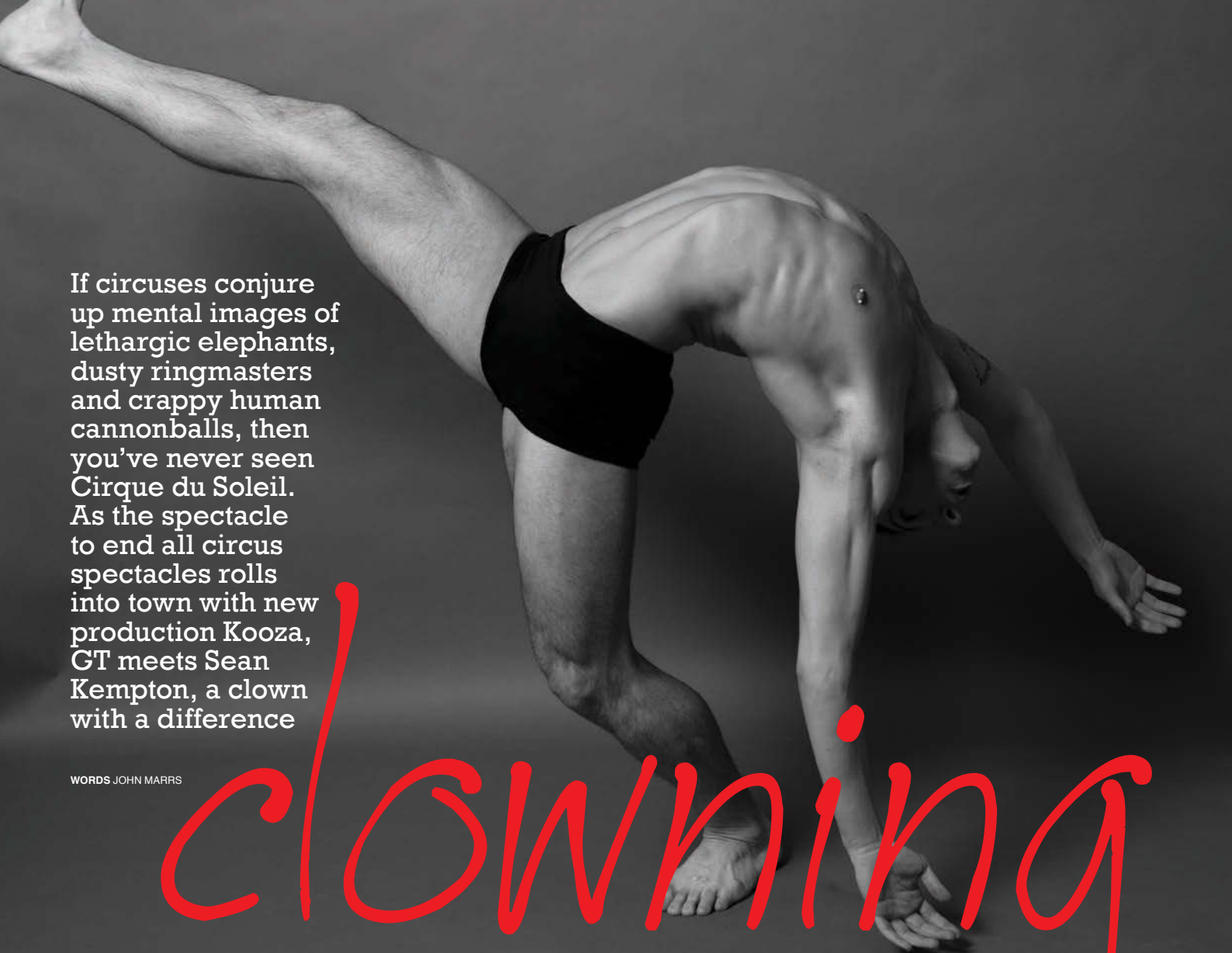
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**Berkeley**  
Designed for life



If circuses conjure up mental images of lethargic elephants, dusty ringmasters and crappy human cannonballs, then you've never seen Cirque du Soleil. As the spectacle to end all circus spectacles rolls into town with new production Kooza, GT meets Sean Kempton, a clown with a difference

WORDS JOHN MARRS

# clowning

**Wipe your mind of everything you've ever seen or read about circuses.**

Because if you want fabulous costumes, goose-bump inducing acrobatics and hot shirtless men tossing themselves off giant stages, then Cirque du Soleil is all you'll ever need under one big top. With 30 different shows now under Cirque's belt, Kooza is the latest to make it to our shores. And as anyone who's ever seen a Cirque can testify, you won't have ever seen anything like it.

Kooza tells the story of The Innocent, a loner in search of his place in the world. And it returns to the origins of Cirque du Soleil – acrobatic performances and the art of clowning. "It's a real rock and roll show," begins Brit boy Sean Kempton, who plays one of three clowns, the brief respite to an overload of the senses. "Kooza is high energy and adrenaline-fuelled, as opposed to some of the more poetic shows. We're in your face and fast.

"The good thing about Cirque now is that it's such an international brand, people have a notion of what we're about – they're starting to understand the difference between a traditional and a contemporary circus."

Cirque du Soleil began life from a group of 20 street performers in 1984. It now employs 5,000 staff, including 1,300 artists from more than 50 different countries. And more than 100 million people in 300 cities have seen their shows.

Kooza features ten acrobatic acts from high-wire to chair-balancing and trapeze, but those brief descriptions don't even come close to summing up the excitement of seeing a show for yourself. And not even the cast can sit through all of Kooza.

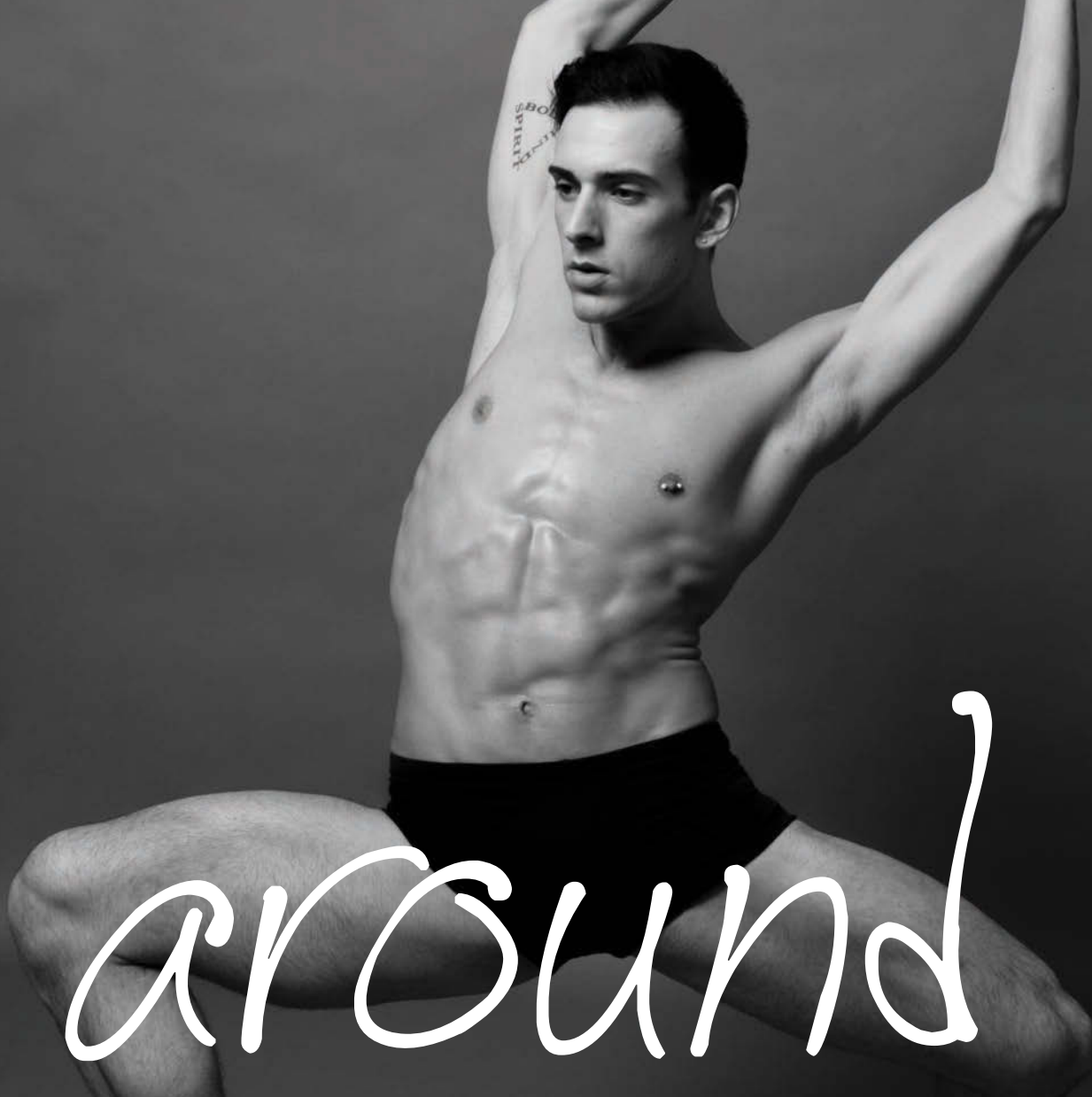
"The wheel of death is crazy," says Sean. "It's like two giant hamster wheels strapped on a big long stick and people jump around and do highly irresponsible things. I've never been in a show where you hear such

a wall of sound as the audience cheers. It's still one of the acts that's too much for me too watch. It's incredible."

There are several reasons why gay audiences can't get enough of Cirque du Soleil. Put aside the incredible costumes, ethereal characters, performances, plots and music, and you're still left with the sculpted bodies of an international team of acrobats and performers. "It's so lush and spectacular, and the attention to detail is incredible," explains Sean. "I think a gay audience appreciates the quality. And there are a lot of hot guys. As a clown, it's pretty tough to be surrounded by hunky chiseled bodies all the time, and it makes me want to start training a bit more. It's a very pretty, beautiful world ... apart from us clowns."

But it's the clowns who are the glue holding Cirque du Soleil set pieces together. "I'm one of three," adds Sean. "We're complete idiots – chaotic, energetic and delinquent. We're surrounded by people doing





ridiculous daredevil things but there's a lot of things a clown carries in a show. We dictate the rhythm and we're the pressure valve, because there's only so much craziness an audience can watch without becoming overstimulated. So it's pretty important for us to let the people breathe. While the audience knows it can't do things like the acrobatics, the clowns provide the human element and they think 'Well, at least I might be able to do what they're doing.'"

Sean was a trained actor and comedian before turning his hand to acrobatics and began performing at the building formerly known as the O2, the ill-fated Millennium Dome. From there, he travelled the world and worked in Las Vegas before joining the cast of Cirque. Kooza is his second show. "Out of the cast of 52, there are eight of us Brits now," he explains. "It's nice to have a mini community and there are a lot of British acrobats in Las Vegas. We're a troupe that fluctuates only a little,

sometimes due to injury or, because we're long-touring shows, a few want to go home.

"Because there are performers from countries including Spain, Russia and China, there's a lot of communication through grunting! English is the predominant language but out of courtesy we try and pick up some other languages as well."

It takes three and half years for the creative brains behind Cirque du Soleil to put a show together. "It's a pretty tightly-oiled machine," adds Sean. "The performers are so hyper-trained, there's a risk of getting injured, but they don't believe it's going to happen. And their secret is they never do their biggest trick in the show. Their main trick is something they keep for backstage – and what they perform on stage will be the one below that. Then they're not worrying about what they're going to perform for an audience, but the one they're going to do in rehearsals."

With 20 of Cirque's shows either in

residence in Las Vegas or touring the world, Sean admits that he can't wait to set foot in his own country again. "For me it's a massive buzz," he admits. "It makes a huge difference playing in front of friends and family, because different countries have a different sense of humour and I know how to tap into the British one very well. I haven't performed at home for about 12 years because I've been touring abroad. There's a colossal amount of people who're going to hit me up for tickets soon.

"But anyone who goes will come away shaking with adrenaline, as it's a beautiful piece of work. The music is fantastic, the costumes are classic and beautiful, and it's been loved in every city we've been to. And of course, there's bloody good and really attractive clowns too..." ■

Kooza begins at the Royal Albert Hall for a limited run, starting 5 January 5, 2015. Tickets are available at [cirquedusoleil.com/kooza](http://cirquedusoleil.com/kooza) or [royalberthall.com](http://royalberthall.com), or call the box office on 0845 401 5045



**“ Ah, Christmas. That time of year when you REALLY see just how much being a grown up truly sucks.**

Goodbye Castle Grayskull, My Little Pony and Nintendo. Hello cheap booze, crap aftershave and a fat arse that stays put until June.

I was one hell of a lucky person to grow up in the 80s and 90s – the greatest era ever for Christmas pop culture, toys, games and movies. He-Man and She-Ra's Christmas special? AMAZING.

I guess all of this adds to why I spend so much time trying to recapture these memories over and over again, and allow my mind to constantly plough through that box of all my favourite things, capturing every sense they stir. It's very often thought that, from the amount of childhood memorabilia I keep, that I'm someone who craves a lacking childhood. But the real truth is, I just miss it all so much.

So yes, let me be the first to throw a great big pantomime BOO and HISS to how stressful and utterly poo it can be to be a grown up at Christmas.

Skip forward to Christmas 2014.

I'm a single, 34-year-old gay man, who lives alone with his dog. So what could I ask Santa for, besides a fridge of Ben and Jerry's and a onesie to spend my days farting into?

I remember how my aunt used to drag herself across the campsite, dressed like the bottom of Liz Taylor's handbag, slurring 'merry fucking Christmas' before my mum had even put the turkey in the oven.

Now, after years of watching her skulking about in the cold and never fully understanding her Christmas hatred, sometimes I catch myself these days, fearing that I may have become her. Ever cynical, always expecting the worst, and making that special subconscious effort to use Christmas as a reason to feel perpetually lonely. Plus, there's only so many times you can dress the dog in jaunty Christmas outfits before it gets really REALLY old.

When I get this way, I need to remember to give myself a good 'holly jolly' slap in the chops.

It's always easier for us to look back at things from years ago and imagine they were a lot easier.

**Watch those films, eat those buggery sprouts and play crappy party games until you can't stand it. Make this a Christmas you'll remember years from now**

@thatbloodymikey

But we all know that journey to adulthood and 'self' is a lot more complicated than that.

Besides good skin elasticity, chances are, your youth was a lot shittier than what you have now. And look at us! We survived it.

We're in the clear and look where we are. On top of that, the crap we would've got in our youth for being gay is over. Family situations can be complicated but, at least now, as a grown up you have the option to get out of there, before dropping the coming out bombshell.

We live in an era where being gay is something that just happens to be, and that is that. Just make sure you move yourself to a town that's aware of that, and preferably one that also has a gay community.

Things are never as bad as they seem. And I know loneliness can be a real bitch at this time of year, but funnily enough, you're not alone in that either.

There are SO MANY of us out there feeling exactly the same, but all with our own way of dealing with it.

Don't be on your own and stop over thinking. Too much of that can only be destructive – believe me.

Call the people who love you, right now, and go spend some time with them.

Watch those films, eat those buggery sprouts and play crappy Christmas party games until you can't stand it. Make this a Christmas you'll remember years from now.

Soon, it'll be another new year. And having that clean slate once again is a great opportunity to get rid of negative dead wood – be they feelings, situations or even people that you need to let go of.

I've decided that I'll stop being so hard on myself this year.

And I hope that resolution lasts at least – until at least February!

So, what's your resolution going to be? ■





*What will you remember?*



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# This year Collabro were crowned kings of Britain's Got Talent, had a number one selling album, Jamie discussed being gay and now they've even done a Christmas special...

WORDS RYAN BUTCHER / BENJAMIN BUTTERWORTH

## What's been the highlight this year?

Michael: We recently sang at Windsor Castle which was really cool, for the Duchess of York – she's a massive fan of Collabro.

Richard: But more importantly, Naomi Campbell and Kate Moss were there!

Michael: We sang Stars and the Duchess started bowing to us and then conducting. It was surreal.

Matt: We did Brighton Pride and there were like 50,000 people, all singing along to Let It Go. Just to have all those people invested in you – and they knew all the words to Stars!

Jamie: I did enjoy G-A-Y to be fair, that was a highlight. And at the end we were singing Let It Go and everyone was going crazy, then all this glitter fell from the ceiling. It was amazing.

**Tell us about the special edition re-release of Stars.** Matt: We've got four songs, two of them are Christmas songs and it sounds really good.

Michael: This time we had chance to rehearse it and tick the boxes, and we were told us to imagine snow falling and bells ringing, like Christmas day, all the harmonies interlinking.

Matt: To get us in the mood, Richard actually came to the studio dressed as a Christmas pudding...

Jamie: I went online and ordered three Christmas jumpers the other day, but then realised I was being ridiculous and cancelled the order. You only need one!

Matt: If we're in the GT Christmas issue,

can we wear cute Christmas outfits? We want us all naked, then just a present box and hats. Keep it real classy!

## How do you spend the festive season?

Richard: My family swaps pyjamas. Not worn! We buy each other pyjamas, then watch Polar Express.

Thomas: Whenever my mum gets me a present, it'll say, 'Don't eat them all too fast!' and it'll be, like, socks...

Michael: We always play Monopoly on Christmas Eve, then on Christmas Day we always get a satsuma in our stockings.

Tom: This time we'll watching ourselves on Christmas Eve of course, because we're doing the itvBe Christmas carol party extravaganza...!

Matt: And people are expecting expensive presents...

## Have you spoken to the BGT judges?

Tom: Yeah, at Simon Cowell's birthday! We sang at that.

Jamie: All the judges were there for that actually, even The X Factor judges. Cheryl was there.

Matt: We've got a book coming out and apparently David and Amanda have said they want some of their quotes to go in the book, because they're still behind us.

Jamie: Alesha was really nice, because I accidentally elbowed her in the head. She miraculously didn't even look around. I did it quite hard and like, I would've been hurt if someone had done that to me. To be fair, everyone was wasted.

**Jamie, how was 'coming out'?** It's all been fine, I think it was really well

handled by you guys and by The Sun. It was just the Mail Online who said 'Jamie ADMITS to being gay' and it was like, I haven't ADMITTED it though, have I? I'd never read such shit in all my life. But apart from that it was really, really positive and I had some really nice feedback from a lot of people. When people did care they were really kind of, mainly, quite concerned just about my welfare. I got some horrible comments on some YouTube videos. You know those 'news' YouTube videos. I got some comments from evangelical types. I've had a lot of people DM me and ask for advice about how to go about telling parents and things, and it was really actually really nice. We're all in a position where we can help people out, and it's been lovely to be able to do that.

**What's for 2015?** Jamie: I'm going to re-enter Britain's Got Talent... It'll be Jamie and Peggy the pug. 'Dancing pug wins with Jamie from Collabro!'

Tom: What we'd really like to do, though, is make a name for Collabro as artists, in our own right. If we can maintain that and be advocates for musical theatre, and LGBT rights, and other charities we're working with. We just want people to know Collabro as good people.

Michael: We'd love to go to Australia too.

Tom: And to break America.

Jamie: And Asia.

Richard: Just get us on a plane! ■

Collabro release Stars – Special Edition on 8 December

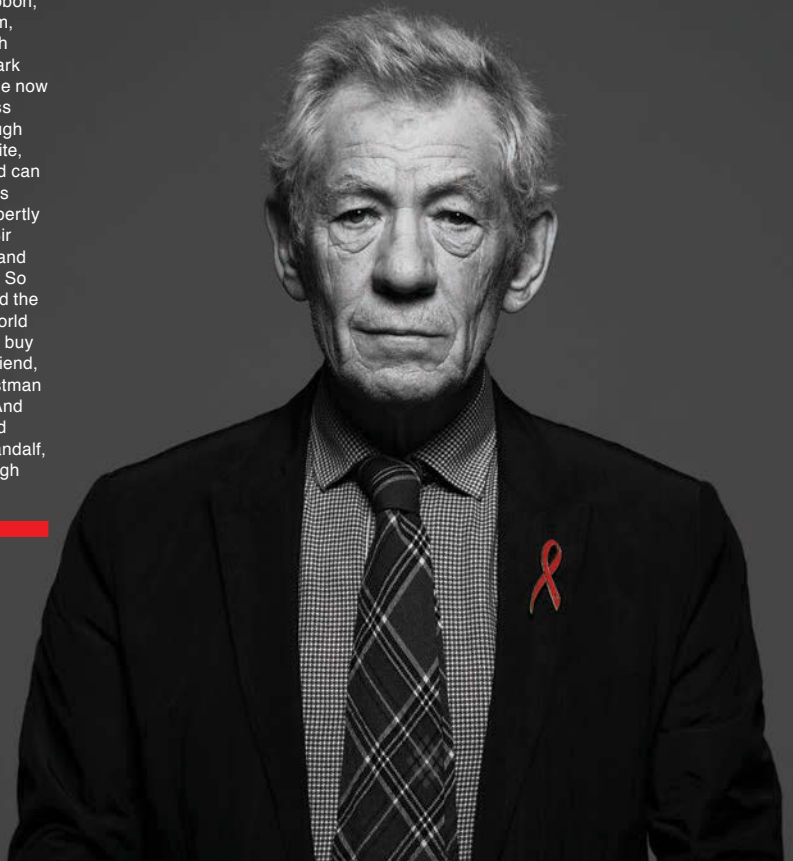






## IN THE RED

It's the season of giving, but if you're one of those 'givers' just itching to buy presents, why not get into the spirit a little earlier this year? And do something for a good cause, to boot. We all know it's World AIDS Day on 1 December, and to help increase HIV awareness in the build up, the National AIDS Trust has teamed up with acclaimed British designer Lulu Guinness for a limited edition brooch. It's a modern twist on the original red ribbon, with a gold trim, embossed with Lulu's trademark lips. It's on sale now in Lulu Guinness shops or through the NAT website, for £19.99, and can be seen on this very page, expertly modelled by Sir Ian McKellen and Andrew Scott. So why not spread the word about World AIDS Day and buy one for your friend, boyfriend, postman – or anyone! And hey, if it's good enough for Gandalf, it's good enough for us. ■



**“Warning: this clip contains nudity.”** So proclaimed Channel 4's 2015 drama trailer, and of COURSE it was all going to be Russell T Davies' fault. Less than a second later, Rufus Hound's arse filled the screen...

This was to be the first official footage from *Cucumber*, aired during Gogglebox on 7 November.

In early November, GT were one of a select few invited to the very first screening of episode one of both *Cucumber* and *Banana*.

Cast – some of them seeing quite a lot more of themselves on the big screen than they might have ever expected – and crew were in attendance. An official launch is due prior to air in January, with high expectations of extensive media coverage for Channel 4's follow up to 1999's *Queer As Folk*.

We're obviously giving away NO spoilers, but fans of Russell's previous work should keep their eyes peeled.

And speaking of peeling, it's fair to say that you'll very quickly never quite look at a cucumber or banana in quite the same light...

We were also treated to select scenes from the web-only 'documentary' spin-off, *Tofu*.

Dealing with real-life attitudes to sex and sexuality, *Tofu* will be available at [channel4.com](http://channel4.com) directly after transmission of *Banana*. If you're prudish, prepare to have your eyes opened.

Roll on January! ■

*Cucumber* and *Banana* are due to air in early 2015



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**GT440**

**Jane McDonald is Yorkshire through-and-through, a former Loose Woman and a cruise line singer who became a national treasure. But now Jane takes on a real terror – the GT sweetie jar!**

WORDS BENJAMIN BUTTERWORTH  
IMAGES ROBERT GERSHINSON



*Sweetie Jar?*





**If you could be any animal, which would you be and why?** I'd be a panther, because I like the coat. I like to be warm and you could wear real fur – because it'd belong to you, wouldn't it!

**If you could only eat one type of food for the rest of your life, which would it be and why?** I want to say caviar, because that sounds lovely, but I'd probably have shepherd's pie. The older I get, the more I appreciate something I can really chew.

**Who's the most famous person you've ever met?** Oh blimey! I've met the Queen and I just bowed, like everyone else. I've done two Royal Variety Performances and I just thought she looked like my nan. Bless her.

**Which film can you quote the most lines from?** The Shawshank Redemption. I do love that film. I just love a really good thriller. I love The Green Mile, too. I can quote quite a lot of that. You probably thought I'd say something like The Wizard of Oz or The Sound of Music, but I love a good story I can get my teeth into.

**What's your favourite shower song?** In the shower it's probably anything by Earth, Wind and Fire, because it's disco and even their love songs are really mmmmm. They get me in the mood. But I don't actually sing anywhere except from where I'm supposed to. I'm the worst person to take to a karaoke party because I won't sing. Everyone's all, 'Oh God, she's not that good!' or 'Look at her showing off!' So I always just applaud everyone else.

**If you were a kangaroo, what would you keep in your pouch?** A bottle of vodka, some high heels and a lipstick. That's all a girl needs.

**What's your hidden talent?** I'm playing guitar. I'm taking lessons right now and I've had to shave my nails down on one hand, which hasn't gone down very well. And I'm a very good cleaner – Kim and Aggie haven't got a thing on me. I love to clean a toilet. I like to get the rim shiny and I like my guests to go, 'Oh, doesn't it smell lovely?' I often have a little bottle of Dettol in my bag, just in case it's disgusting when I DO go out. I end up being in there ten minutes.

**What's the worst present anyone's ever given you?** A nose trimmer. I wouldn't

mind, but I didn't have any hair in my nose at that time – and it was my husband who bought it! I mean, I do now, I'll be honest. It'd come in handy now.

**What does success mean to you?**

My success day is getting my knicker drawer tidied out. I've been so lucky in my career, so it's the little things in life that make me feel great. Singing I just do as a second nature, getting my knicker drawer tidied out is a big success.

**Who would you like to play you in a movie about your life?** Oh, it's so boring! Nobody'll do it! But probably Julie Walters as we're both northern.

**What's been your most embarrassing moment?** I've had so many. Outfits coming completely open. Your 'quick changes' are so quick that the zip sometimes goes on the wrong tooth. You go onstage and then it just sort of unravels off your back and then, that's it, your tits are out. That's why now I only have gowns that have no zips in. Usually it's my backing singer who sees, because she keeps her eye on me like my mother. One time it happened and she just went, 'Oh my God, her backsides out!' She came up behind me and just scooped the gown up.

**Are you good at flirting?** I'm absolutely the best. It doesn't matter who or what. It can be a dog, it can be a man, a woman – I just I love flirting. I don't see gender. If somebody is attractive then they're attractive.

**What's the worst date you've ever been on?** A boy who I was crazy about called Mark. He took me out for dinner and I kept on going off to be sick because I was so nervous. I was so into this guy, but he never took me out again because I smelt of vomit all night.

**What's the biggest lie you've ever got away with?** I worked for a computer firm once and they asked, 'Do you have computer skills?' And I said, 'Yes, of course! You just show me the way that you do it and I'll be fine...' I got the job and I hadn't got one qualification in computers. But you can bluff your way through anything, really.

**Would you eat a worm for £500?**

No, love. ■

Her new album Jane McDonald: Remixed is available now, [jane-mcdonald.com](http://jane-mcdonald.com), @thejanemcdonald

**The biggest gay stories of 2014. We finally got the right to marry, Tom Daley confirmed he's gay and a drag queen won Eurovision. What a year.**

WORDS BENJAMIN BUTTERWORTH

**[01] Winter Olympics take place in Russia.** The Sochi Games were surrounded by controversy, as Putin's country continued their homophobic agenda. Many athletes stood up to the country's laws, however, talking of their support for gay rights and wearing rainbow badges. Google also used a rainbow coloured logo for the opening ceremony.

**[02] Councillor blames gays for flooding.** David Silvester, a UKIP councillor in Henley-on-Thames, claimed that marriage equality had caused a raft of winter floods across the UK. He was subsequently flooded with people pointing out he's an idiot.

**[03] Drag queen goes viral.** Irish drag act Panti Bliss became a global star when a video of her preaching the need for equality went viral. The story became PinkNews' most viewed story of all time.

**[04] James Arthur exposed.** The once popular X Factor winner referred to another man as a "fucking queer" in one of his rap verses. He then accused lesbian singer Lucy Spraggan of attention-seeking after she criticised him online. James has since made a recent vow to support Stonewall, which remains to be seen.

**[05] Same-sex marriage legalised.** It only took generations of campaigning and countless lives lost to the bile of bigotry. But finally, in March of this year, men like us became equal in the eyes of the law. As the first marriages took place, David Cameron wrote in April's GT:

[05]





"While the fight for equality goes on, it's important to celebrate when progress has been made. As we see the first same-sex marriages, we can look back and marvel at what has changed." Well said.

**[06] Senior gay MP cleared of rape.** Nigel Evans, the former House of Commons deputy speaker, was cleared of one allegation of rape, five sexual assaults, one attempted sexual assault and two indecent assaults. He described the experience as "11 months of hell."

**[07] Anti same-sex marriage MP becomes equality minister.** Nicky Morgan, who voted against marriage equality, was appointed as education secretary and minister for equalities. She later claimed she's "on a journey" to supporting our rights.

**[08] Tom Daley confirms sexuality.** The diving star told Keith Lemon's *Celebrity Juice* that he IS indeed gay, and not still interested in women as he had claimed in a YouTube video. He also confirmed he was in a relationship with Oscar winner Dustin Lance Black. The couple recently auctioned a double date.

**[09] MP thinks gays don't have sex.** Nadine Dorries, who advocates for abstinence education, said that allowing two guys to get married would "take the sex out of marriage." Seriously, Nadine. It won't. Scout's honour.

**[10] Conchita Wurst wins Eurovision.** The Austrian drag queen took Europe by storm in May as she became the queen of Eurovision. A week later her anthem, *Rise Like a Phoenix*, hit number one in Russia. Russia then threatened to withdraw from the 2015 contest and Terry Wogan said she'd made Eurovision a "freak show."

**[11] Kellie Maloney comes out as trans.** The boxing promoter, formerly known as Frank, revealed she is undergoing

gender re-assignment surgery. Maloney had previously stood as a UKIP candidate, but refused to campaign in Camden because there were "too many gays." She later apologised. Before explaining why she still thinks marriage equality is wrong.

**[12] Gay couple attacked with bleach in London.** Two men leaving a club in Vauxhall were attacked with bleach and nearly blinded in a vicious hate crime. A man was later convicted and jailed for the attack.

**[13] Commonwealth Games air gay kiss.** The 2014 Glasgow Games opened with a kiss between John Barrowman and a lucky male actor, which was broadcast live to some of the most homophobic countries in the world.

**[14] Ian Thorpe comes out.** The most decorated swimmer of all time came out as gay, just months after publishing an autobiography in which he explicitly claimed he wasn't.

**[15] Cartoon Network air first gay kiss.** The TV channel introduced its first-ever openly gay characters to show Clarence. The two men kissed each other on the cheek, but an original plan to kiss on the lips was axed after the channel feared a backlash.

**[16] Story of gays and miners made into film.** The story of London's Lesbian and Gays Support the Miners group became an award-winning box office smash as it recalled the long, cold battle to overcome homophobia during the miner's strike.

**[17] Joan Rivers dies.** The world famous comic passed away following complications during throat surgery, aged 81. In her last every gay press interview, Joan told GT she'd never been happier.

**[18] Thomas Hitzlsperger: "I'm gay."** The former West Ham and Everton player became the most high-profile footballer



30  
YEARS OF  
GAYTIMES





[25]

since Justin Fashanu to reveal his homosexuality in January this year. In an interview with German newspaper Die Zeit, he said he'd only realised he was gay "in the past few years."

**[19] t.A.T.u singer condemns gays.** Yulia Volkova said in an interview that she would "condemn" her son if he were gay, adding that "a real man must be a real man." Turn to page 99 to read what her former band mate, Lena Katina, has to say on the matter...

**[20] Blair opens up on gay equality.** Former Prime Minister Tony Blair gave a rare interview, revealing to GT that the homophobia he witnessed while growing up inspired him to outlaw it once in power.

**[21] UKIP homophobic allegedly caught in brothel.** Roger Helmer, who argued gay people "undermine" marriage, among other homophobic rants, pleaded for privacy after he was caught visiting a notable massage parlour. The parlour's motto was: "Driving men mad since 1999", though it's likely his wife was more mad about it.

**[22] Pope makes historic moves on gay acceptance.** Pope Francis said he wants the church to be less rigid and more welcoming, relaxing views on homosexuality. A meeting of the synod narrowly rejected a change in approach, in spite of the Pope's strong support.

**[23] Polls finds 16% against gay sex.** A major Observer sex survey found that almost one in five Britons still believe sex between consenting men should be illegal. Remarkably, 21% of those aged 16-24 said they identify as either gay or bi.

**[24] Culture Club reunite.** Kinda. Boy George's classic 80s group reformed, performing a big comeback gig at legendary London venue Heaven in October. But they had to cancel dates after a polyp was found on Boy's throat.

They hope to reschedule in 2015.

**[25] Michael Cashman becomes a Lord.** The life-long gay rights activist and co-founder of Stonewall became a Labour peer in October. Tragically his husband, Paul Cottingham, died just days before he took the post.

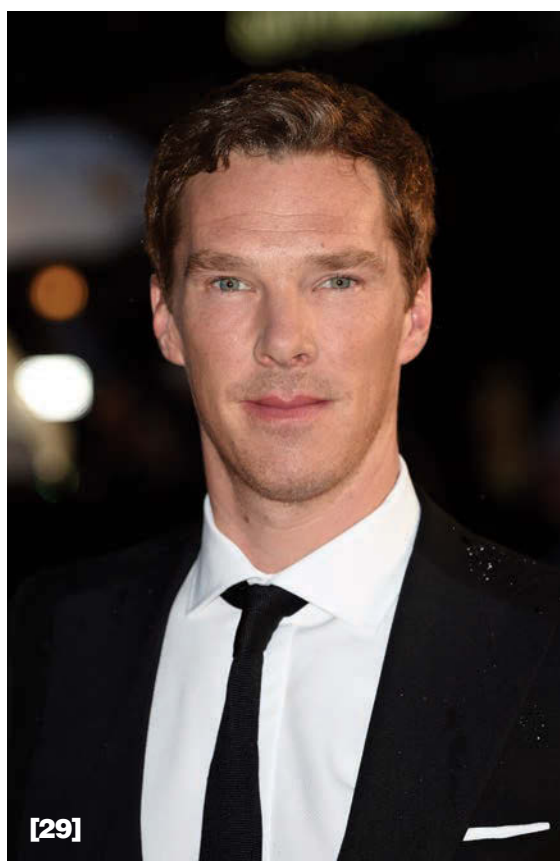
**[26] Apple boss comes out.** The tech giant's CEO, Tim Cook, came out as gay in October, saying that after years of being open with colleagues, he was ready to discuss the issues publicly. The following week a memorial statue of Steve Jobs in St Petersburg was torn down.

**[27] England manager LGBT ignorant.** Roy Hodgson was left embarrassed after he was unable to say what LGBT stands for. Sir Ian McKellen later said the England boss was "not in the real world" and called for more efforts to make sport open to gay people.

**[28] Department for Education send anti-gay tweet.** Nicky Morgan's department tweeted: "Nonsense to say schools 'must teach gay rights.' We want schools to teach curricula based on British values." They later clarified, saying they meant to say that all minority rights should be taught, not just those of gay people. Right.

**[29] Alan Turing becomes Hollywood star.** Benedict Cumberbatch told the story of the gay WW2 hero, who is thought to have saved 14 million lives. The film faced controversy after it was revealed a gay sex scene was cut out.

**[30] Scotland welcomes marriage equality.** Following a vote in February, December sees the first same-sex marriages in Scotland. The month also welcomes a change in law so guys in civil partnerships can convert to marriages, without having to 'divorce' first. ■



[29]



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# IT'S BEEN CALLED A "HIV WONDER DRUG" AND "THE GAY MORNING AFTER PILL", BUT WHAT EXACTLY IS PrEP? AND WITH NEW DIAGNOSES IN GAY MEN AT AN ALL-TIME HIGH, JUST HOW SERIOUS A WEAPON IS IT IN THE FIGHT AGAINST HIV INFECTIONS?

WORDS RYAN BUTCHER

## NEW HIV INFECTIONS AMONG

gay and bisexual men in the UK are at their highest since records began. This is an undeniable, unavoidable fact.

According to Public Health England, 3,250 men who have sex with men were diagnosed with HIV in 2012 – the most recorded in a single year since the epidemic began in the 80s. Yes, it's true that HIV is no longer a death sentence and that those with access to treatment continue to live long and happy lives. But it's clear from this eye-watering statistic that – before we can even begin to get serious about a cure – something must be done to prevent the continually-increasing rate of new infections. Well, that 'something' may have arrived.

In the past few weeks, two studies have been released celebrating the effectiveness of the drug pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) in preventing the contraction of HIV, with both yielding magnificent results.

The first was the PROUD study, from the UK's Medical Research Council (MRC), which found that PrEP was "highly effective" for men at risk of infection. The steering committee of PROUD even proclaimed that access to PrEP on the NHS should be fast-tracked.

The second study, from the French trial ANRS IPERGAY, went even further

and claimed that PrEP was at its most effective when taken immediately before and after sex, earning it the nickname of "the gay night before and morning after pill." It's brought hope that, if PrEP is taken on an "on demand" basis, it could be much less detrimental to a struggling NHS.

"It could be good news for costs," said the National AIDS Trust's director of policy and campaigns Yusef Azad. "We'll now need to look at how such 'intermittent PrEP' works in a 'real life' setting, but this news adds to the urgency of the NHS deciding how to introduce PrEP effectively."

But how exactly does the drug work? Essentially, what PrEP does is get into the cells and stops the virus from replicating. It doesn't stop HIV from getting into the cells outright, but by preventing the infection from becoming established, it allows people's own immune systems to clear the infected cells away.

"We know condoms work very well for reducing the risk of HIV infection," explains Professor Sheena McCormack, chief investigator of the MRC's PROUD study, "but they have to be used consistently."

"We know being in a monogamous relationship with someone who's either negative, or who's positive but on

treatment with no detectable virus in the blood, works very well too. Or even not having sex at all! There's lots of options out there, but if none of those suit, then PrEP is being shown to be a great tool to prevent HIV infection."

While the headlines that've been hitting the national newspapers have been overwhelmingly positive about PrEP, and how it can be used to prevent infection, the key word we need to remember is "prevention." It's understandable that people are getting excited, but it's important we realise that PrEP isn't a cure.

"This is completely unrelated to a cure, because it's all about prevention," adds Professor Sheena. "But what it IS is something that works incredibly well. If you can identify yourself as being at risk, then you're putting your potential partners at risk too, because there's going to be a period when you have HIV and you don't know about it, and that's when you're at your most infectious. This is why we have to keep pushing PrEP forward."

So what happens next? The MRC are hoping that once the reports have been written, the necessary authoritative committees have met and the finances have been agreed, PrEP could be made available on the NHS by the time of the







**What did the people on the PROUD study have to say about their own experiences with PrEP? At their own request, we have chosen to protect their anonymity.**

"I never really acknowledged to myself how many times I'd have sex without a condom. Now that I'm on PrEP, I probably bareback the same amount, but feel more secure that I've done harm reduction."

"I'm at a high risk because I frequently have anonymous sex and frequently bareback as both a top and bottom. It's dumb luck that I'm still negative. If PrEP was available on the NHS, I'd use it – no question about it."

"Sex with a condom just doesn't feel like real sex to me. My strategy for staying safe has been to avoid fucking, but sometimes I'd fuck bareback anyway and worry about it afterwards. PrEP has allowed me to feel more relaxed and in the knowledge I was being protected myself and – just as important – that I wouldn't pass on HIV to someone else."

"You just get into the rhythm of taking the drug, as it were. It's just a thing that I do now. I've had no trouble with it at all and haven't experienced any side effects. I have a partner who's HIV-positive and, for me, it's a safety net which protects us both."

Clinical Priorities Advisory Group's commissioning cycle of 2016/17. So a little way off, for now.

"I don't know if we can bring that forward," Professor Sheena tells us, "but there's going to be a meeting to see if we can. There's no more red tape for PrEP than there is for anything else, and the poor old NHS is in a bad way as it is. But if there's anything that's going to help move it forward on the agenda, it's going to be advocacy. The more demand and more awareness, the greater that will help in bringing it into clinics."

It's clear that PrEP is something that those at risk of HIV infection need access to sooner rather than later. Matthew Hodson, the chief executive of men's health charity GMFA, reiterated the MRC's stance that the more the gay and bisexual community demand access to PrEP, the greater chance we have of seeing it brought into clinics earlier.

"PrEP is NOT the magic bullet," Matthew explains, "it's not going to stop all new infections of HIV, but it's another useful weapon we can add to the armoury of HIV prevention methods. And quite frankly, with the rate of infections that we're seeing year on year, we need as many weapons as possible."

"One of the things that's likely to make it available is for gay men to actually demand it. We've got to look at it on the basis that it's something we can add, and I think we've also got to get beyond the idea that gay sex is dirty and something to be ashamed of and that we need to be punished for it."

"Some of the reactions you see online and on the message boards to people who actually want to take PrEP to reduce their risk of HIV infection has been an almost internalised homophobic kind of hatred. It feels to me that it actually comes out of a feeling that we shouldn't be enjoying sex. I think it's really important that gay men DO have great sex. We want gay men to have the best sex they possibly can, with the least possible harm." ■

For more on PrEP and the MRC's PROUD study, visit [proud.mrc.ac.uk](http://proud.mrc.ac.uk), or alternatively visit [gmfa.org.uk/prep](http://gmfa.org.uk/prep)

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**“** Here's a question for you. Do you believe that people can change their mind about gay rights? To go from an opponent to an advocate?

Think about your own life. I bet many of your family members have changed their viewpoint as they've gone on a journey with you, from your process of self-discovery to a loud and proud member of the LGBT community – assuming that you are. I imagine not everyone's parents reacted well. I know mine were fine, a lot better than I expected, but many of my friends' parents were less than happy when their son or daughter uttered those fateful words 'I'm gay.' Some parents and relatives never change, while others evolve into straight allies.

My boyfriend's mother is a good example. When we first met, I'd that morning been on the television talking about same-sex marriage. Suffice it to say, she wasn't a fan. Civil partnerships were great, she explained, but marriages were supposed to be about one man and one woman. We argued, we

debated and she thought about it. Over the next few months, she changed her mind completely and, a few years later, is rather pushing for me to marry her son. I don't begrudge her for taking a contrary view when we first met because she listened to the arguments, saw the reality and came around to the correct way of thinking.

That's normal people, but should the same rule apply to politicians? A good case in point is Nicky Morgan, whose appointment as Education Secretary and Minister for Women and Equalities surprised many – because she'd voted against this government's only piece of equality legislation, the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act. On her appointment, initially just as Minister for Women, I was quoted in the papers as asking whether she was only the minister for SOME women, as she opposed the freedom for women to marry other women.

When she was promoted to the Cabinet as Minister for Equalities, another minister, Nick Boles, was handed the responsibility for the implementation of same-sex marriage and conversion

**I bet many of your family members have changed their viewpoint as they've gone on a journey with you, from self-discovery to loud and proud**

ceremonies from civil partnerships. David Cameron made this appointment because of Mrs Morgan's opposition to same-sex marriage. Then, 20 months after she voted against making marriage equal, in an interview with PinkNews, she explained that she'd probably vote differently today, and that she supported the institution of marriage being open to all couples. A few days later, making her first gay rights speech at the PinkNews Awards, and facing heckles from the former Culture Secretary Ben Bradshaw, she said that she'd changed her mind, and questioned what the point of Parliament was if you couldn't listen to the arguments and change your view.

It's not as if politicians don't have a tendency to change their minds. Ben Bradshaw himself had previously claimed that same-sex marriage wasn't a priority for the gay community. Lord Norman Fowler, who received the PinkNews Peer of the Year Award for his campaigns on LGBT and HIV issues, was part of the government that introduced Section 28. David Cameron famously voted against the repeal of Section 28, but then introduced same-sex marriage.

In her speech, Nicky Morgan asked to be judged on her record as Minister for Equalities, claiming that the community couldn't have a more passionate advocate for LGBT issues around the Cabinet table as her. I'd like to believe her and I think that, as a community, we should give her a chance. True liberation for LGBT people means convincing those who oppose our rights to change their minds – and working with them to help improve equality for all. So long as Nicky Morgan is genuine, and I've no reason to doubt that she is, we must judge her on her actions today rather than condemn her for the wrong beliefs of her past. ■

@benjamincohen





“**‘My husband shot me in the face,’** the Hispanic lady with the gigantic scar on the side of her head moaned softly, fingering the horrible pink raised nubs on her disfigured noggin’, eyes vacant, numb at the thought of having her head blown away by the man she thought loved her. It got worse. **‘When I woke up I could feel the soft wetness of my brains dripping over my face while my husband was fucking me.’**”

As the holiday season approaches, and especially while listening to testimony like the above at my daily group therapy sessions, I’m constantly reminded of how extremely grateful and fortunate I am. On this particular day, we were supposed to each stand up and say the one most horrendous thing that had acted as a potential trigger for our drug abuse.

‘I can’t afford deodorant,’ one rather heavysset man in an awful, raggedy old sweatshirt mumbled embarrassingly, claiming he was afraid to hug people because he smelled so badly.

Another skin-and-bones man

in tan construction boots worried about being unable to pay for his handicapped daughter’s knee braces; a balding ex-Marine spoke stoically of the time he was beaten on the head with a wooden axe, tossed in front of a moving subway train and electrocuted by the third rail, burnt to a crisp like an overdone onion ring.

It was now my turn to wow the group with a shocking and heart-rendering tale of woe.

Only problem: I didn’t have one! When it came time to tell the group what life-changing, earth-shattering events had befallen me, scarred me forever and made me turn to a life of crime and drugs, my mind went blank. There was simply nothing there. The only things that popped into my pleasure-seeking, spoiled rotten, self-centred little brain were that I really couldn’t stand the sticky, sweltering summertime NYC humidity. And my just-as-gross-and-pathetic friend, James St James, was getting twice as much publicity as I was for doing, y’know, nothing.

What the hell was I even doing

**‘When I woke up I could feel the soft wetness of my brains dripping over my face while my husband was fucking me’**

@alig\_aligula

here? Talk about feeling out of place!

Another day, the topic was ‘What to do when people are stealing your food from the refrigerator at the homeless shelter.’ The leader of the group was trying to inspire a conversation on coping skills, but instead talk turned into revenge and ways of hurting people.

‘Pour Visine in your soup,’ one skinny old lady shouted, pulling a tiny bottle from her threadbare pocketbook. ‘It’s poisonous, it’ll kill ‘em.’

‘I’d piss ‘em down while they’re asleep, if I’d ever catch anyone stealin’ my shit,’ another man exclaimed. It was like sitting in an insane asylum.

I spoke to my counsellor after the meeting, I wanted so badly to help some of these people, especially the one who couldn’t afford deodorant. When I was released from prison, someone had sent me an entire case of Giorgio Armani Acqua di Gio anti-perspirant. I wanted to bring a few bottles to the guy. ‘You can’t,’ my counsellor said. ‘You might embarrass him. He might try and manipulate or use you. You don’t even know, he could sell or trade them for drugs. You have your own issues to deal with right now.’

I left that meeting, riding home on the train and thinking about all the things I had to be grateful for. I had a spacious, three-bedroom condominium to live in with friends who cared enough to give me my own room; writing gigs at Gay Times and the New York Post; three boxes of brand new, super expensive designer clothing given to me by magazine stylists and showrooms. This very column is being written on an MacBook Pro given to me by an ex-boyfriend.

Later that night, I enjoyed a scrumptious dinner of boneless ribeye and couscous. Coming from where I was, life couldn’t be much better. ■



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Kieron wears dressing gown by The White Company, [thewhitecompany.com](http://thewhitecompany.com) and boxer shorts by Derek Rose, [derek-rose.com](http://derek-rose.com)



# THE WEDDING OF THE DECADE

Whether it's Colin and Barry's first kiss on **EastEnders** in the 80s, or Nathan Maloney stepping out onto Canal Street for the first time in **Queer as Folk**, there've been some truly iconic and generation-defining gay moments on British telly. But **Hollyoaks'** Kieron Richardson is about to embark on one of the biggest and most meaningful storylines ever to befit a gay TV character. And it all starts with a Christmas Day wedding...



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# K

**ieron Richardson is about to make** television history. Never before has a character on a British series had a gay church wedding. Yet Kieron's character Ste and James Sutton's John Paul McQueen will finally tie the knot after a whirlwind on-screen relationship, in a special hour-long episode due to air on Channel 4 on Christmas Eve. But it doesn't end there.

In typical *Hollyoaks* fashion, the wedding won't go ahead without its fair share of drama. There's a massive twist on the day, which we're going to leave for you lot to find out about for yourselves – we don't want to spoil it. But trust us, we were there at the wedding, and let's just say it throws a bit of a spanner into the works of Ste and John Paul's special day.

The second problem they face, though, will come just a couple of weeks into their life as a married couple. It starts a storyline which is going to be integral to *Hollyoaks*' programming in 2015 and completely reshapes the character Kieron has been playing for more

than nine years – the revelation that Ste is HIV-positive.

"It's been a fantastic 12 months for me," Kieron tells GT, "but not a very great one for Ste, who's been on a downward spiral of drug and alcohol addiction.

"We all know in the past he's had massive upsets in his life and lost so many close family members and friends, so it's almost natural that he'd try and use anything to blot out the pain and misery that he's been through. It's been amazing for me to do as an actor because it's been challenging. You have to really get yourself into a vulnerable position to do a performance like that – and in a room full of 30-odd crew members. It can be quite painful to do, but you have to really go for it because it's so important for us to send out the message that drugs are bad.

"We've seen Ste go through rehab and fight his demons, and come out of it thinking he's a better and stronger person. When he does get out, Kirsty-Leigh Porter's character [Leela Lomax] tells him she thinks John Paul has been having an affair, so it's been interesting to see if he's going to be able to use the coping methods he's learned in rehab or if he's going to go straight back down the drug path again. There'll be a few blips along the way which then leads towards the marriage, and every soap wedding has to have its own disaster.

"Ste and John Paul's wedding does actually end with them saying 'I do', but just before that, there's a

big shocker which is a result of his days being dependant on drugs and alcohol, and leaves Ste thinking: 'How the hell has this happened?'

"But Ste's diagnosis with HIV is going to be as a result of his drug and alcohol addiction, too. He cheated on John Paul on a night he doesn't remember. You see Ste waking up in some random boy's bed and he freaks out, but doesn't really think anymore of it. That's until this boy, whose name is Connor, walks into the village to give Ste the biggest revelation that he's ever going to get in his life. Connor says that he's HIV-positive and that Ste should go and get himself tested."

As if the fact *Hollyoaks* was running a gay wedding storyline wasn't headline-grabbing enough, and a credit to how far the LGBT community has come in terms of representation on the ol' gogglebox, that fact that they're dedicating so much of their programming around HIV and, as such, the promotion of safe sex, isn't just socially responsible – it's worthy of outright championing.

It's something Kieron's desperately keen to get right, too. In fact, in between set-ups of our Christmas cover shoot – who ordered the hot boy in his pants from Santa? – he's intently reading our HIV columnist Positive Luke's latest output, clearly looking to soak up all available knowledge about HIV and AIDS.

"The HIV storyline is going to start just after Christmas," Kieron explains. "Just when you think Ste



[cover]





Kieron wears Onesie by One Piece,  
[onepiece.co.uk](http://onepiece.co.uk)



[cover]



A full-page photograph of a man with short brown hair and a light beard, looking off to the side. He is shirtless, wearing plaid pajama bottoms with a white drawstring. A plaid shirt is draped over his right shoulder, and he is holding the bottom hem of it with his right hand. The background is a solid red color, decorated with numerous vertical strings of small, warm-white lights that create a bokeh effect.

Kieron wears pyjamas by The White Company, [thewhitecompany.com](http://thewhitecompany.com)



and John Paul have gotten through the drama at the wedding, Connor walks in and flips their world upside down. There's going to be an entire standalone episode where Ste and John Paul go to the clinic to get tested. You go through the whole journey of them making the decision to go – because I've spoken to people about it and it can be an absolutely terrifying to find out the answer if you're not strong enough. Some people refuse to have the test and try and live their life as normal as they can without finding out. Ste's contemplating whether or not to do that – he's frightened of knowing.

"I couldn't possibly imagine what goes through your head in that time when you don't actually know the result. We had some great people come to visit us from the Terrence Higgins Trust and one of the biggest questions I wanted to ask was 'What's the first thing that goes through your head when you find out you're positive?' The feedback was that it's just numbness – complete numbness. Not hysterics, not tears. That's not to say that doesn't happen to some people, though. It's just like anyone who comes out as being gay – everyone's journey is individual to them. But the route we're going down with Ste is numbness – it's the last thing he's expecting. But if you're going to play with fire and have unprotected sex, you have to face the consequences as well."

While in 2014, a lot of the big battles for equality in the UK have already been won – same-sex marriage, et al – one of the last big fights is still to get proper sex education for LGBT youth on the school curriculum. The simple truth remains that there are kids in school – gay, bisexual, queer or otherwise – who just don't know the dangers they're possibly putting themselves at risk of by having unsafe sex. And while there are major and magnificent strides being made in the prevention of HIV transmission, we're still a long, long way off from a cure. It's what

makes this storyline on Hollyoaks so important – potentially millions of teenagers and young people will be rushing in from school, putting on Channel 4 while they have their dinner and learning first-hand about what could happen if you're not safe. It forms Hollyoaks' big campaign next year of promoting safe sex – both gay and straight. It's about time a TV show took on that mantle, and it's something the entire team at Hollyoaks can be proud of. Kieron included.

"I've had a very mixed reaction from the people I've spoken to about the storyline, as to whether or not we're going to be judged and how the HIV-positive community might not welcome it," says Kieron.

**Kids aren't being taught about how to prevent things like HIV, or all the other sexual diseases that you can stop with protection. It just needs to be changed. But even if a handful of people go and get tested, that's a handful of people who weren't before**

"But then, on the other hand, people have been thankful that this storyline is getting out there and that people are going to be more aware of HIV. Someone is diagnosed with HIV every single day of the year, after all.

"The story might highlight the need to get tested and that having unprotected sex could lead to HIV. I didn't come into it thinking 'I want to be a spokesperson for HIV', but at the end of the day, I'm an actor, I'm doing a job and I want to do it to the best of my ability and learn new things. If it means I DO become a spokesperson, then I'll absolutely take that on. I'm not afraid to go into schools myself and speak to kids to make sure they're aware about proper sex education.

"With the government and sex education in schools, I know sometimes religion plays a part, but I think it's such a shame children can't access the education they need – it's just a no-go area when it should be compulsory across the board. All that's taught is about how to have a baby and how to put a condom on. Kids aren't being taught about how to prevent things like HIV, or even gonorrhoea and all the other sexual diseases that you can stop with protection. It just needs to be changed. But if there's one thing that Hollyoaks is absolutely great at, it's issue-led stories. Like James Sutton's male rape storyline last year and, in fact, the government's changed its policy on that.

"I think this storyline could change perception in some way. I'm hoping on a big scale, and you never know if it'll help us change the focus of the government's agenda. But even if a handful of people go and get tested, then that's a handful of people who weren't getting tested before."

It's shameful for the government that, in 2014, youngsters are learning more about HIV from the telly than in their classrooms. But, as Kieron said, if just a few people get tested or become more knowledgeable about HIV, then it's all been worthwhile.

But it's not just a busy time for Kieron because of his momentous storylines. In fact, he's going to be tying the knot in real life next year, after getting engaged to his



Kieron waves mistletoe by John Lewis, [johnlewis.com](http://johnlewis.com) and wears lounge pants by Bjorn Borg, [bjornborg.com](http://bjornborg.com)

long-term boyfriend Carl Hyland back in July. So is his character's marriage to John Paul a bit of a test run for his own walk down the aisle?

"It's like we're having a dress rehearsal," beams Kieron, "but it's a very different wedding to mine. Ste and John Paul's is as traditional as it can be – of course, with plenty of drama. But for my wedding, we've not opted for a church. Instead of walking down an aisle, I wanted to walk down a catwalk, so we hunted high and low, and finally found a venue big enough to accommodate one. It's beautiful – and the whole thing's going to be in one location. We're having the vows, the meal, the night do and the dancing all under one roof.

"I feel sorry for Carl though because I've been a total bridezilla about it all. I think the only thing I've really let him have is the first dance song – I've been terrible! I've invited every single cast member from Hollyoaks too, so it'd be rude if they don't turn up!"

And, of course, before all that there's Christmas to get through too. In between such a heavy filming schedule, has Kieron even had the time to get into the spirit of the season?

"I'm not going to lie, one year I put my tree up in September," he laughs. "It's ridiculous I know, but with being on the show and filming for Christmas really, really early, I also see it being Christmas a lot sooner than it is! The most heartbreaking and annoying thing though is tearing everything down once Christmas is over. I hate it, because I don't WANT Christmas to be over, but also because it's such a boring chore. My tip with the tree is to just smash a couple of bin bags around it, literally pick it up and put it in the garage. Then the next year you just have to rip the bin bags off and it's already done!"

"Christmas to me is always about family first, but I'd be lying to

myself if I didn't say it's about the presents as well – but for me it's not about receiving them. I just love buying people presents and I love seeing people's reactions. I grew up in a very normal family from a very normal background, but the fact that I've worked hard now to become a bit more successful and can actually afford to treat my mum to presents she never thought she'd get... I just love that look on her face.

"The best Christmas present I've ever received though is last year when Carl bought me a car! I'd always wanted a 4x4 and he actually bought me one. I was like, 'Oh my God I love you so much.' He got quite a lot from me last year, but how do I top a bloody car? This year though, because we're getting married, we said we're going to chill and not go mental.

"On Christmas Eve though we usually make the best tea ever – something like steak and chips – and we usually sit down and watch Christmas films. But this year it's going to be all about the Hollyoaks Christmas special. How great that we might actually inspire people to come out at Christmas? Kids might go to bed on Christmas Eve after watching the episode and think 'OK, on Christmas Day, I'm going to come out to my parents.' It'd be absolutely magical."

So remember, when you're with your families this Christmas Eve, stuffed full of mince pies and a little boozey after one too many glasses of Buck's Fizz, tune in to Channel 4 for Hollyoaks. Not only is it an incredibly momentous moment for us to have a gay wedding on telly, but it's going to kick start one of the most important gay storylines in history. And we don't know about you, but GT will raise a glass to that. ■

The hour-long Hollyoaks Christmas Eve wedding special will air on Channel 4 on December 24, @hollyoaks, @mrkieronr



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# CAMP CHRISTMAS

The essential ten albums you need on your iPod this Christmas



10

**Christmas Spirit**  
**Donna Summer**

Admit it, you didn't know that the late, great Donna had stepped away from disco and was more Dasher, Donner and Dancer with this collection.

09

**A Christmas Cornucopia**  
**Annie Lennox**

Of course she didn't do a take on Last Christmas – we'll leave that to the likes of Billie Piper, thank you. Traditional festive offerings with a slightly darker twist. Festive fact: We still have an apple we stole from her Christmas tree.

08

**Merry Christmas... Have a Nice Life!**  
**Cyndi Lauper**

As kooky as you might expect from La Lauper, with a few traditional versions of the classics thrown in.

07

**Christmas in the Stars**  
**Star Wars Christmas Album**

A very niche-y Christmas. The phrase 'camp as Christmas' probably originated because of this album.

06

**A John Waters Christmas**

The fact this album has a burning Christmas tree on the cover should give an indication of where it's going. Some of the most



offensive – and therefore hilarious – Christmas songs ever recorded.

05

**Merry Christmas**  
**Mariah Carey**

An album so big that it spawned a sequel, Merry Christmas II You. All I Want For Christmas Is You is possibly contender for the greatest Christmas song ever – if it wasn't for Band Aid II and Baby It's Christmas. The common theme here being Bananarama.

04

**Cool Yule**  
**Bette Midler**

"Have a Yule that's cool," The Divine Miss M crooned. It goes without saying that her take on the traditional Christmas album is, well, a tad camp.

03

**Christmas, With Love**  
**Leona Lewis**

Surprise new contender – the best Christmas album in a long, long time. Where many seem to be going through the motions, Leona got it spot on...

02

**A Christmas Gift For You**  
**From Phil Spector**

From a time when the gifts Phil Spector bestowed on people were far more welcome comes one of the greatest Christmas albums ever.



01



**This is it – the album that’s guaranteed to get us in the festive mood. Our number one Christmas album of all time is, as Ru would say, available on iTunes. RuPaul, and guest stars including Michelle Visage, put the camp into Christmas with a selection of 13 classics songs and a little extra added... RuPaul the Red-Nosed Drag Queen, anyone? Or how about I Saw Daddy Kissing Santa Claus? But what made RuPaul want to do a Christmas album...**

**RuPaul:** Well, we’re talking about a Christmas album that was – how many years ago? 17, 18 years ago? So, you know, GT, you’re asking us to stretch our little minds...

**Michelle Visage:** Drugs! Drugs made us want to do a Christmas album, GT!

**R:** [Laughs] Listen, we’re both from the school of you do everything and see what sticks. And of course, we never knew that this album would become the sort of classic Christmas traditional album all these years later, but I’m happy it is.

**M:** They have Johnny Mathis, they have Barbra Streisand, and they have Ho Ho Ho.

**R:** I do remember that, recording, we recorded it in my living room...

**M:** Yes, we did.

**R:** ...in New York City. Probably in July, is my guess. We recorded it all over the course of, I think, three days.

**M:** Yeah, it was so quick, and it was in Ru’s living room. He had it all set up. And I didn’t even know the words to Hard Candy Christmas. I think at that point I hadn’t even seen The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas.

**R:** What?!

**M:** I’d never seen the show and you said, ‘this is what you’re going to sing, sing it like this’, and I was like ‘alright!’, you know, and I just sang it.

**R:** This is the reason why we’re still talking about the record, because the spirit and the chemistry that

Michelle and I have is evident on the record. You can hear us having a good time. So whether it was a Hanukkah album or a Kwanzaa album, it didn’t make a difference, because the chemistry is there. There’s a lot of improv on there. And we knew this about our chemistry because we’ve been doing radio and known each other for years, you know, we knew that the chemistry was there, so whatever we apply ourselves to, it’s going to have that same chemistry.

**Are there any songs missing from Ho Ho Ho?**

**R:** I think I did all the songs I wanted to do. Because my all-time favourite Christmas song is All Alone On Christmas, and I think I do that on there, right? Hard Candy Christmas – in fact I got a note from the writers of Hard Candy Christmas and they said this was their favourite version ever.

**M:** Aw, better than Dolly’s?

**R:** Better than Dolly’s!

**M:** Get out of town!

**R:** Their favourite version of the song ever. I knew I wanted to do Hard Candy Christmas and All Alone On Christmas, that’s why they’re the more serious ones. That’s the reason they’re on there. But the fact that I’m doing it, it makes it campy.

**M:** We should have redone O Holy Night and called it [sings] His Hole is Tight! Little did we know... Dammit! My favourite Christmas song is O Holy Night. I love it, I always have. I don’t really care who sings it; I can listen to choirs sing it, I can listen to Josh Groban sing it. Whoever sings it, it’s just something about the melody in that song.

**R:** You gotta admit that Mariah’s O Holy Night is the definitive version.

**M:** It’s definitely one of them. Barbra does it...

**R:** With Mariah, well, she gives herself up.

**M:** Mariah gives anything up in the studio...

**Chances of a follow up?**

**R:** Oh yeah, absolutely, I love Christmas songs. In fact, I have

01

playlists of Christmas songs, and each playlist is about four hours. So every Christmas I play each playlist, it has all Christmas music, and I absolutely love it. I always have loved Christmas songs.

**M:** Because it automatically puts you in that mood.

**R:** It’s so camp. I think it’s so much fun. Even the camp stuff still holds the true meaning of Christmas, the sweetness and the love about another year gone by. Christmas is more than just, you know, baby Jesus and the manger. There’s something about the end of the year and being able to reminisce about another year that’s passed, that’s just so beautiful. I’d love to do





– every year, I talk to Lucian and say, we gotta do a Christmas album this year, we've got to. And it's just never worked out. But really, I will do another Christmas album, and Michelle will be on there.

**The last time they listened to Ho Ho Ho?**

**M:** I have it on my iPod. And my kids play it every single year, they love it. And they don't just love the songs that mommy's on – they love the whole album. They love RuPaul the Red-Nosed Drag Queen and I Saw Daddy Kissing Santa Claus. All the wild ones, my kids love. They're all politically incorrect.

**R:** The last time I heard it was last Christmas. I was actually in a store,

shopping, and I realised: 'Oh my God – they're playing Ho Ho Ho!'

**M:** Oh my God! We should do a Christmas album of all dirty remakes, why can't we do that?

**R:** That's it, that's what the next Christmas album will be. Dirty Christmas songs.

**Why Ho Ho Ho still remains popular?**

**R:** You know what? It's because of the energy in the room with us recording it, because we're actually having fun. In about ten minutes we're going to start recording our podcast, and I think the reason that people listen to our podcast is because the energy and chemistry that we have is

infectious.

**M:** I'm not infectious, our energy is infectious.

**R:** And I think that's what comes through on Ho Ho Ho, and I think that, if you put the record on, you get a dose of that fun every time you hear it.

**M:** It makes you feel good, GT. Like you walk away from that album going, yeah, it's Christmas, but I just had a great time listening to that.

**Christmas plans?**

**R:** I'll probably be recording or doing a book. I like to stay busy.

**M:** I'll be getting an anal bleaching; hopefully Ru will be there taking pictures, but if not, I wish him a Merry Christmas. ■



ho ho ho-  
rupaul



# THE MOVIES YOU NEED TO MAKE THE YULETIDE GAY

10  
**The Nightmare  
Before  
Christmas**

Tim Burton making his first appearance on our list... This is your gateway from Halloween to Christmas. And also a brilliant album.

09  
Die Hard

Yes, it's a Christmas movie. No, *Love Actually* isn't included because they removed all the gay scenes.

08  
Female  
Trouble

Only one festive scene, but it's a scene that forever changed every gay man's Christmas morning.  
#chachaheels

07  
**Santa Claus:  
The Movie**

From the makers of Supergirl, it's this or La Lansbury as Mrs Santa Claus, basically.

06  
The Muppet  
Christmas  
Carol

Essential felt festive fun with an album to match – and also fully acceptable to begin watching from November.

05  
**Home Alone  
2: Lost in New  
York**

The sequel  
specifically,  
because it's more

Christmassy. We all want that hotel room to be our Christmas morning. AND it stars Tim Curry basically playing the Grinch.

04  
**The Grinch**

Already brilliant, this works even better if you turn the film off after the Grinch successfully steals all the Christmas presents – perfect ending.

Bonus gay points:  
Christine Baranski  
in a very short  
Mrs Claus outfit,  
straddling a fairy  
light gun.

### 03 Gremlins

Celebrating 30 years in 2014, it's Christmas AND it's horror – and one of the greatest movies ever. And why we don't believe in Santa.

02  
A Diva's  
Christmas  
Carol

Vanessa Williams stars as Ebony Scrooge and Kathy Griffin turns up with her original nose to show the nasty diva the error of her ways. Amazing.

## 01 Batman Returns

You know, mistletoe can be deadly if you eat it... A film about dealing with duality and the acceptance of a harsh society, with some PVC and whips thrown in. And all with a Christmas theme. Wonder why we like it?





## THE TV SPECIALS YOU NEED TO ADD SPARKLE

10

### Star Wars Holiday Special

Turns out that Bea Arthur runs the Mos Eisley Cantina. And does a musical number. Never officially released "cough" YouTube "cough", Carrie Fisher claims to show it at parties "when I want people to leave".

09

### Doctor Who

Killer Christmas trees, suspicious snow, Sarah Parish as a fabulously camp giant spider and Catherine Tate in a wedding dress. Oh, and Santa's a robot.

08

### Ab Fab: Cold Turkey

Edina completely over-doing Christmas and a visit from Kate O'Mara. It's every gay man's Christmas

07

### Pee Wee's Playhouse Christmas Special

Cher! Grace Jones! Oprah Winfrey! Zsa Zsa Gabor! Charo! She knew.

06

### He-Man and She-Ra: A Christmas Special

As if the super-powered siblings weren't gay enough already, Christmas means puppies and musical numbers. Not enough? Hordak's penis helicopter. No, really.

05

### The Sonny and Cher Christmas Collection

Sadly these two holiday specials are the nearest we've got to a Cher Christmas album – so far.

04

### Victoria Wood With All The Trimmings

Not only is this actual comedy genius, it's the last great sketch show Victoria did. To date. Still waiting...

03

### The League of Gentlemen

For those that don't like a conventional Crimbo, the League take it to a brilliantly bleak place. Don't touch the monkey's bollocks...

02

### RuPaul's Christmas Ball

The first of two festive outings for everyone's favourite drag queen.

Essential Christmas viewing for more than 20 years...

Yes hunty, she was doing this long before you saw it on Netflix. OKRRR...

01

### The Box of Delights

Celebrating 30 years this very December, a classic and creepy BBC Children's drama based on John Masefield's novel.



**Who's your favourite panto dame?**

That's a difficult one, I've worked with so many. Don Maclean is fabulous from Crackerjack, he's fabulous. Christopher Biggins is a great dame as well. He should've been born a woman or he could possibly come back as a gay man.

**Who would be your panto prince?**

My ideal panto prince would have to be Barack Obama. He's got gorgeous lips that could envelop your whole face and I just love his voice, I think he's got a fantastic speaking voice. Can you imagine? "Hi there, you're the most beautiful girl I've ever seen."

**Worst Christmas present you've ever received?**

It was a toilet roll knitted as an old woman with a hat on. You put the toilet roll inside it. I looked after it for years, but then gave it to a charity shop...

**What's the most wicked thing you've done?**

Oh dear, I think the most wicked thing I ever did... Oh dear. I didn't do it on purpose, but I sat on my

friend's new doll's head. She only had it a day for Christmas. I didn't do it on purpose though! But I guess that was a bit wicked really. Terrible.

**Do you wish you had a magic mirror?**

Yes, well, I already have one. I've had it in my bathroom for about 34 years and it doesn't show one line, so I'm not getting rid of that. It's definitely magic.

**How wicked are you?** I'm hopelessly un-wicked. But because I work in acting, then I can really be as wicked as I can imagine. If you're an actress, you've got to find some wickedness about you. I would justify it by saying I'm not really like that, you know... I'm just trying to put my acting shoes into practice.

**Who would you most like to be 'behind you'?**

I think George Clooney. I couldn't do anybody ugly. He's got to be gorgeous, darling. And Matt Lapinskas in the show is very nice, he's very attractive. He'll have all the blokes coming in. ■

Su Pollard is in Snow White at the Sunderland Empire, 12 Dec – 4 Jan

su pollard





**Philip on Snow White...** It's one of my favourite jobs of the year. I love pantomime. When they asked if I wanted to do Manchester I said definitely. It's only half an hour from home, and I've just had a baby boy, so it's nice to be closer to home rather than the end of the Earth!

Warwick [Davis] is a great guy, he's a lovely man. He's going to be directing as well, so I can't wait. He's got tons of experience.

And it's great that the company have got the budget to get little people involved – normally it's just children with big heads. The last Snow White I did was in Worthing and, because you've got the children with big heads, you've got a lot of auto-cue. It's great to have actual actors playing the roles, it really gives it life.

**Do you believe in ghosts?** I don't NOT believe in them, but I only believe in something when I see it myself. And I was on Most Haunted, but I still didn't see any. Very disappointing. I was running around hallways for them and everything.

**If you could have any superpower, what would it be?** To fly! I just always loved Superman when I was growing up and constantly had dreams about flying. I watched a documentary the other night about the wing suit guy and he jumped off

a mountain in South Africa. He base jumped basically with the wings and it looks unbelievable. But this guy hit the edge of the rock and fell tumbling. He couldn't walk for six months and I was like 'probably won't give that a go...'

**Who's your biggest man crush?**

Leonardo DiCaprio. I just think he's unbelievable. He's such a great actor and everything he does, I just can't keep my eyes off him. Any film he's been in. Django he's great in. The Wolf of Wall Street he was amazing in. Keeno.

**What's the biggest lie you've ever got away with?** I remember years ago when I was on Brookside and I was a massive Liverpool fan. A big game was coming up against Liverpool and I was in work. I was like, 'I can't miss this game I've got my tickets and everything.' So told the managers on Brookside 'Sorry, I'm ill...'

I went away to Rome, saw the game, and who did I bump into? Phil Redmond from the show. I got fined and got a stern telling off. I was crying my little eyes out. Don't think you got away with that, Phil...

**Favourite cereal?** Sugar Puffs. No, really! I just think they're dead easy, light and you can eat them before a performance. ■

Philip is in Snow White at the Manchester Opera House, 5 Dec – 4 Jan, @officialolivier

Philip  
Olivier



# HE'S BEHIND YOU! PANTO 2014

WORDS BENJAMIN BUTTERWORTH

**We fell in love with Linda Gray as the vodka-swilling, man-hunting, lip-quivering Sue Ellen Ewing in the world's biggest TV series, Dallas. After completing three series of the 2012 Dallas reboot, Linda is taking on a glamorous role of a different nature...**

WORDS CRISTO FOUFAS

**How conscious are you of Sue Ellen's gay fan base? Is Sue Ellen a gay icon?** I adore my gay fan base! They're fantastic, so supportive, and always have been! It makes me so happy to hear from my gay friends who tell me so many fabulous stories about their growing up and finding out they're gay through loving Sue Ellen, and I'm like 'fantastic!' It's such an honour, I feel! Though frankly, I'm

tired of the labels. Why do we have to call people gay, straight, lesbian...?

**Do you feel that Dallas has a gay legacy?** I feel that was one of the reasons that Dallas was globally watched. You'd hear in real life about women alcoholics, depression, gay references, but they were all totally pushed under the rug. I feel that it was so groundbreaking to feature those issues. We made people think. They didn't have to agree, just think. So we saw the depression, we saw the mastectomy, we were the first night time soap opera on television and the issues we featured were really innovative television.

**So, what do you know about Cinderella?** First of all I am SO excited. I've never done panto and, when I got the phone call, we'd just heard Dallas had been cancelled. I received a call asking if I'd like to play

the fairy godmother in Cinderella! I challenge anyone not to be excited when they get that call! I turned into a five-year-old wanting to run around with a magic wand! I immediately called Cynthia [Cynthia Cidre, the executive producer of Dallas] to check that, if Dallas did return, it wouldn't interfere with the schedule. They told me that nothing would happen before January, so I'm doing it.

**Panto isn't very American though, is it?** Ah, but I have so many British friends who were so excited I was doing panto. Patrick [Duffy, Bobby Ewing in Dallas] had done it, Charlene [Tilton, Lucy Ewing] had done it and they'd remarked how much fun it was. When I received the call, I called Patrick and he went on and on and on about how wonderful the people were, how loving and supportive everyone was. In fact, he just kept raving about it, so I said 'OK! Alright! I'll accept the job!' He still keeps calling as he's so excited for me. That's how we are, we're really supportive of each other.

**Will there be any Sue Ellen references? Can we expect your fairy godmother to have a magic wand in one hand and a bottle of vodka in the other?** [Laughs] Well, I've not seen an official script yet as they're still tweaking it, but I'm hearing titbits here and there about how hilarious it is, so I have wonderful expectations! I'm hoping for a sparkly dress and heels!

**Are you here for Christmas?** I have invitations from my dear friends in London as I only have four days off! On Christmas Day I've been invited to a traditional Christmas lunch, so my children are happy I won't be alone.

**Would Sue Ellen approve of your role in Cinderella?** I think Sue Ellen would thoroughly approve! She would love the costume, though she'd probably want to redesign it, but that's OK. And her fairy godmother costume would definitely have a little pocket in there for her hip flask. ■

Linda Gray is in Cinderella at the New Wimbledon Theatre, London, 5 Dec – 11 Jan, @linda\_gray







# Duncan James

## Why do you love panto?

It's a very British tradition and I used to always go as a child, so it brings back good memories. It provides me with a creative alternative to my normal life – and I get to wear tights!

**Who's your favourite famous Jack?** It's got to be Jack Sparrow. Such a great character.

**What's the wickedest lie you've got away with?** 'I'm 100% straight.'

**What's your guilty pleasure?** It doesn't happen often because we're always travelling, but I always like a game of roulette at the casino. The flashing lights, fruit machines and the glamour.

**If you could have any super power, what would it be?** I'd want to be invisible! It'd be great. I'd love to be able to listen in on private conversations and get all the gossip.

**Which Hollywood hunk would you marry?** I'd marry Will Smith, because he seems like such a fun and a loveable man. Plus, he's great to look at! ■

Duncan James is in Jack and the Beanstalk at the Birmingham Hippodrome, 19 Dec – 1 Feb, @mrduncanjames

# Warwick Rowers

**The Warwick Rowers are just normal lads, larking about and having fun at uni. Except they do it naked. And for our pleasure. In this exclusive GT shoot at London's The May Fair hotel, we follow the boys as they get dressed – and undressed – for the launch of their 2015 calendar**

WORDS BENJAMIN BUTTERWORTH IMAGES ANGUS MALCOLM



**DIGITAL  
EDITION  
BONUS**





**Name: Paddy West**

**Age: 24**

**From: Exeter**

**Degree: Civil engineering**

**Dream job: Water recourse manager**

**Fave biscuit: Bourbon**

-----  
"I started rowing when I joined Warwick. I didn't know about the calendar when I joined the team, but on day one they were like, 'Oh, look at this!' The year when I joined, it got very, very big at Christmas, and I thought, 'OK, I want a piece of this!'"

There's no real selection process, everyone is invited to join. And I think you can see that, really, we're just normal guys.

I mean, yes, some of us happen to look good, but we're not recruited in, it's just all of us.

The calendar isn't even like the traditional naked calendars – there's no plant pot covering our bits. It's just, 'Do stuff naked, and we'll try

and get photos where we can't see everything!' But boys are boys. We don't mind being naked in front of each other, though. It's like, 'Oh, whatever', it's good fun! Though there's a motorway nearby, so they get a good view too..."

-----  
**Campest moment?** I'm really into glam rock, and I remember starting a gig in Elton John shades and leather trousers. That was pretty camp...

**Biggest man crush?** David Gandy is a pretty good bloke. He looks quite a bit like my dad though, so it's probably a bit odd me saying that. Though my dad is a bit more like Austin Powers with his chest hair – whereas I've got none.

**Who was the last person to see you naked?** Oh, probably the guys in the gym. Or my girlfriend. Actually, God, I really should just say my girlfriend. Revealing far too much!

**Are you a good flirt?** Oh, too good.

I do like flirting. My chat-up lines are mainly about wanting to save the planet. Girls love water recourse jokes. Or I move on to saying, 'Have you seen this calendar?!'

**Would you rather talk like Yoda or breathe like Darth Vader?** That's a big question. Oh man. Breathe like Darth Vader – he just commands a bit more respect.

**What's the naughtiest thing you've done this week?** Oh, God, I was in the House of Commons the other day and we tried to get in the Speaker's bed. That was pretty naughty.

**Where's the strangest place you've had a snog?** In the library! **Laurence did that too.** Oh did he!? As if! The thing is, we don't get to party much. We're locked up in there and so the fact you can't do something makes it so much hotter. We did it in a private study booth. Intimate, beside the glass windows... ■







paddy





*laurie*



**Name:** Laurie Hulse  
**Age:** 22  
**From:** Hertfordshire  
**Degree:** Politics  
**Dream job:** Politician  
**Fave biscuit:** Chocolate Hobnob

-----  
 "I joined Warwick University just over two years ago. I'd played rugby at school all my life and I didn't much like the culture of it. I wanted to try something new and rowing seemed like a real challenge.

A couple of weeks after I'd been in the club they released the 2013 calendar. By the time it came to term three, when they were shooting the next one, I wanted to get involved. And I got involved with both sides of the calendar, stripping off and producing it. The calendar takes a lot of man hours.

I'm pretty comfortable in my own skin and you're with your best friends, who you've probably seen naked in the showers before, so it's all a lot of fun.

Though I'd never been photographed naked before, other than silly things, like... Actually, er, no, never before!

And the thing is, we're just students, we're not world leaders. It's one thing signing something at the UN decreeing equality or passing laws. We can't do that, but we can make things happen. We're just normal guys, straight but allies of the gay community, doing our bit. It's been a bottom-up approach."

-----  
**Have you had any marriage proposals?** Oh yeah, Matt and I get a lot! People think Matt and I are married, which is kinda funny. People think we're a couple, but we're not. Sorry.  
**If you had to marry a man, who would you choose?** Bruce Wayne. It's Batman! He's my favourite superhero. I'd marry him.

**Would you rather not eat or not speak for 24 hours?** That's a tough one, because I eat a lot and I also talk

a lot. I'd probably have to not talk, because I could still tweet and text.

**Where's the strangest place you've snogged someone?** I probably don't know that because I've been drunk out of my mind! From my recollection, it'd probably be the lift in the library. 'Hey, you're going to floor two, too?'

**What's the best lie you've got away with?** I've definitely got away with stuff before when I've been hungover. I punctured both tyres on my car when I hit a speed bump too hard, and told my mum I'd had a sneezing fit at the wheel and that was why, when actually I just wasn't paying attention...

**Are you good at flirting?** I don't know, I haven't flirted with myself! But I'm not shy, let's say, no...

**Who was the last person to see you naked?** Paddy! He's in the shoot we did for you guys. We looked good. ■

The 2015 calendar is £12.99, available at [warwickrowers.org](http://warwickrowers.org) and [prowler.co.uk](http://prowler.co.uk), @naked\_rowers, @laurenceghulse





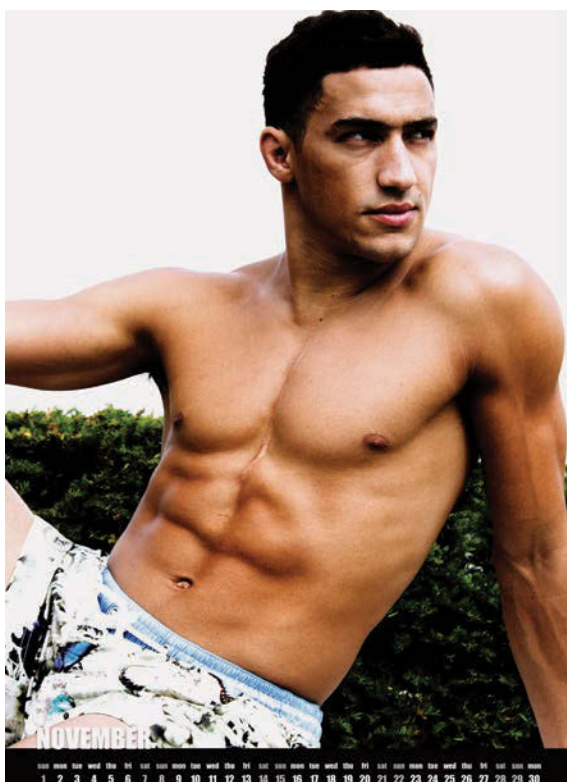
WORDS BENJAMIN BUTTERWORTH

# CALENDAR BOYS

**2015 just got a lot steamier with these men stripping to their undies – and sometimes less. If rowers and red heads aren't your thing, then check out this hoard of hotties...**



TOMMY GAT FLIRT STUDIOS



## TOWIE

How do you fancy waking up next to a different TOWIE boy each month? It's not just the pages of GT where the guys get their kit off, but also in their 2015 calendar. £8.99, shops nationwide

## Ashley McKenzie

The repeat GT naked issue star has gone all patriotic with his 2015 calendar. And it looks like he really is the best of British. He's yours for just £10.99, [greatcalendaroffers.com/ashley](http://greatcalendaroffers.com/ashley)



## Shayne Ward

He's The X Factor winner with the sex factor. Turn a couple of pages, there's a very revealing calendar preview just for you... Signed calendar, £21, [pledgemusic.com/shayneward](http://pledgemusic.com/shayneward)

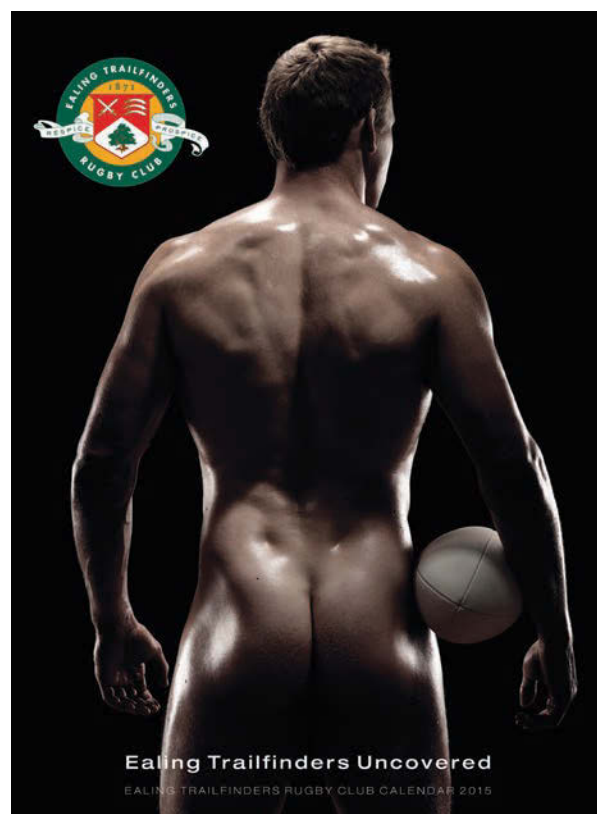


## Tom Daley

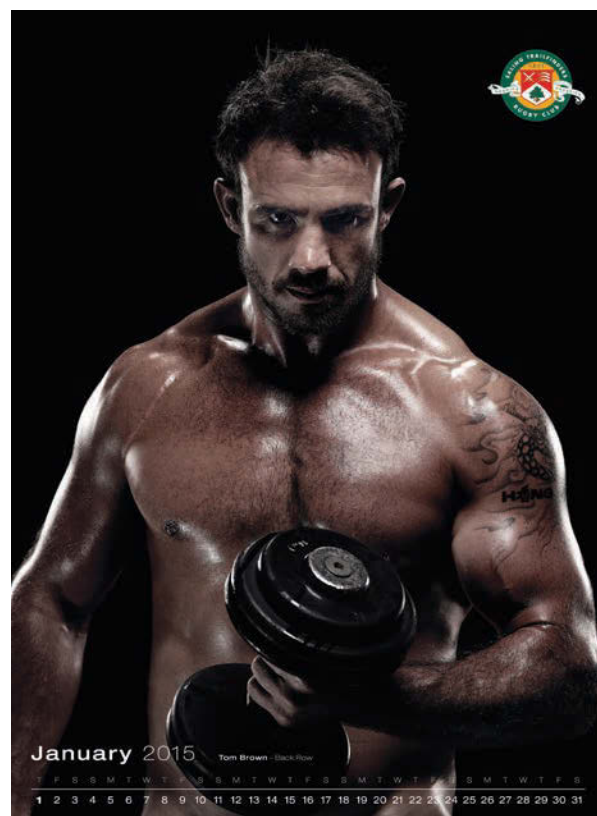
The diving supremo disappointed some with his largely clothed 2014 calendar, but ever one to give the public what they want, he's all stripped off for 2015! £9.99, [prowler.co.uk](http://prowler.co.uk)

## Mark Wright

He's the TOWIE hunk turned Strictly stunner with a soap star other half to boot. Mark Wright has got it all. Including a beautiful bod. All 12 months of it. The official 2015 Mark Wright Calendar is on sale in HMV, Clintons, Calendar Club and all good retail stores or buy online at [danilo.com](http://danilo.com) now.



**Rugby boys** Ealing Trailfinders Rugby Club have been getting their kit off to help raise money for a former player who was seriously injured. Pretty faces and good guys. The dream. £15, [ealingrugby.co.uk](http://ealingrugby.co.uk)







**Boys of Bridgend** They know what a good time looks like in Bridgend, and that's larking about in the buff. This charity calendar raises money to prevent prostate and testicular cancer. £10.99, [boysofbridgend.ecwid.com](http://boysofbridgend.ecwid.com) ■



**Ben Cohen**  
**The StandUp**  
Foundation boss has released previously unseen images for this year's calendar, and boy are we glad he did. £27.99, [prowler.co.uk](http://prowler.co.uk)

**Meat 2015**  
**The Meat mag men** are so ahead of the curve. Hashtags are so 2014. It's all about tashhags for 2015. £15, [meatzine.com](http://meatzine.com)

**Ricky Rayment**  
**This TOWIE lover** is often baring all in the celeb mags. Now he's baring his body, all to remind you which month it is. Useful. £10.99, [celebritymerchandise.co.uk](http://celebritymerchandise.co.uk)







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# Shaune

WORDS BOB HENDERSON IMAGES JOSEPH SINCLAIR



**Former GT cover star and X Factor winner Shayne Ward is stepping up as a soldier in the epic The War of The Worlds – alien territory compared to his previous West End board treading. Shayne tells us why it's his toughest role yet, plus gives us hints about his eagerly-awaited fourth album with an 80s legend...**

ward



## s the Artilleryman in The War of

The Worlds, sexy singer Shayne Ward will act his cotton socks off with quite a blokey cast. It includes fellow X Factorer Joseph Whelan, Westlife's Brian McFadden – "I've known him for years now, it's gonna be crazy to go on tour with him" – Jason Donovan and Liam Neeson.

"I've been lying and saying that I'm on stage with him every night," Shayne says of Mr Neeson. "If I ever get to meet him in real life it'd be incredible, he's a fantastic actor."

It's not a complete fib. He IS on stage with him – it's just as a 3D holographic bit of hi-tech wizardry. With all these vocally talented men touring together, we've got one thing on our mind. A manband.

"Ha! Can you imagine?"

Shayne bursts out laughing at the suggestion. "I love things like that, if we all bounce off each other and find this singing bond along the way, you never know where these things lead. I can't imagine us a manband though..."

Things are a lot more serious though, and his role as the Artilleryman is a bit of a come down from the high camp of his Stacee Jaxx character in Rock of Ages, or the teeth-n-tits twirling of Dancing on Ice.

"Oh yeah, there's definitely no large blonde wig, no sparkly numbers," he says. "The good thing about it is I get to play a soldier, which is pretty cool. And this is only my second acting role, so I'm looking forward to getting involved, trying to bring out all the emotions, to tell the story and make people believe what I'm telling. It's

so far apart from Stacee Jaxx..."

What it lacks in camp, it more than makes up for in gravitas. Jeff Wayne is conducting a band and 36-piece string orchestra, and it's a considerably more complex character that Shayne has taken on.

"He's this solder and he's seen all his comrades die and be killed by Martians and fighting machines, but he believes that he can start a brand new world on the ground. If he can find enough living people and defeat these fighting machines. But he's drunk at the same time, because I think, deep down, the only way he can believe his own lies is to drown his sorrows. There's a lot of emotion to draw upon there."

Luckily it's an emotional state Shayne jokingly finds easy to get into.

"Well, I'm from a big Irish family and we like to cry," he laughs, "and alcohol, obviously, we like a drink every now and then. I don't know if they're going to keep a lock on the fridge before I go onstage, but I can play a very convincing drunk."

Drunk soldiers aside, Shayne has also been toiling away on the as-yet-untitled album number four, which is being produced and co-written with Mike Stock, of Stock Aitken and Waterman fame.

"He's an absolute 80s icon and legend of the music industry. They were gods, Stock Aitken and Waterman. Everyone knows them. They provided us with Kylie and Jason, Donna Summer, Rick Astley, Bananarama... So he's been an incredible producer to work with. It's been about four years since I had my own original material out, so we've done an original album of pop and soul. It's been a great experience."

If you've listened to any song from The Hit Factory, you'll be able to spot that distinctive style a mile off, and the Hi-NRG sound looks set to creep into Shayne's next album.

"You're gonna know it's a Mike Stock production. The main thing when we set out together is the

songs have to tell a story, it can't just be a simple gimmicky song. Everything tells a story from start to finish. I wrote the songs with Mike so I know the fans are gonna enjoy what we've created."

And no, it wasn't a deliberate attempt to get the gays on board. The album will have a lot of up-tempos and mid-tempos and should be out around February, which you'll be able to mark it in your 2015 Shayne Ward calendar. That's the reason he gives us for having such a well groomed beard lately, particularly in his recent Twitter selfies.

"If you check the pictures a couple of days before, it probably looks a bit overgrown and scruffy. But I enjoy having stubble, I'm not the biggest clean shaven guy, I look about four..."

Now we're not going to talk to Shayne without some nostalgic X Factor chat – he's backing soulful voices this year and is rooting for Andrea Faustini – which, when we cast our minds back, seems like a more innocent, simpler and easier time. Which Shayne only half agrees with.

"The tension and the hard work that was put into it would be exactly the same, it's the scale that it's gone to. It's had to adapt and get bigger. Now we have social media, Twitter and YouTube, whereas in 2005 we had blogs.

"It's easier now to have success in the sense of you don't have to wait to come second, third or fourth. You've already got that mass media exposure from all that social media. But I wouldn't say it was easier, mine was just a smaller stage with less dancers, that's all it was."

Either way, if you ask us, we reckon Shayne's turned out quite brilliantly. Well, check the calendar and see for yourself... ■

The War of The Worlds – Alive on Stage! is touring across the UK until 15 Dec, [thewaroftheworlds.com/tickets](http://thewaroftheworlds.com/tickets), Shayne's calendar is available now, @shaynetward









red, hot  
in the  
city



**Thomas Knights and the Red Hot boys have taken the world by storm, revolutionising sex appeal and confirming what we always knew – gingers are fit. Naturally, we sent our ol' friend Thomas slap bang to the middle of New York City for a brand new shoot, exclusively for GT. Merry Christmas, boys**

PHOTOGRAPHER THOMAS KNIGHTS  
ART DIRECTOR JOHN COOPER  
ASSISTANT THIBAUT LA DROITTE  
MAKEUP MICHELLE WEBB  
HAIR SHANE THOMAS

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THOMASKNIGHTS.COM, REDHOT100.COM



**DIGITAL  
EDITION  
BONUS**

**Ken wears** hat by Nike  
Shirt by Calvin Klein Collection  
Briefs by Calvin Klein  
Socks by Marks & Spencer  
Boots by Calvin Klein Collection





Boxer briefs by Calvin Klein



Hat by Neon Hart  
Tank top by H&M  
Boxer briefs by Calvin Klein





Boxer briefs by Calvin Klein  
Socks by Marks & Spencer  
Boots by Calvin Klein Collection

Jeans and briefs by Calvin Klein





【calendar boys】



Hat by Nike  
Shirt by Calvin Klein Collection  
Briefs by Calvin Klein



Hat by Nike  
Trunks by AussieBum  
Socks by Marks & Spencer  
Boots by Calvin Klein Collection

gaytimes.co.uk

GT 73



[calendar boys]



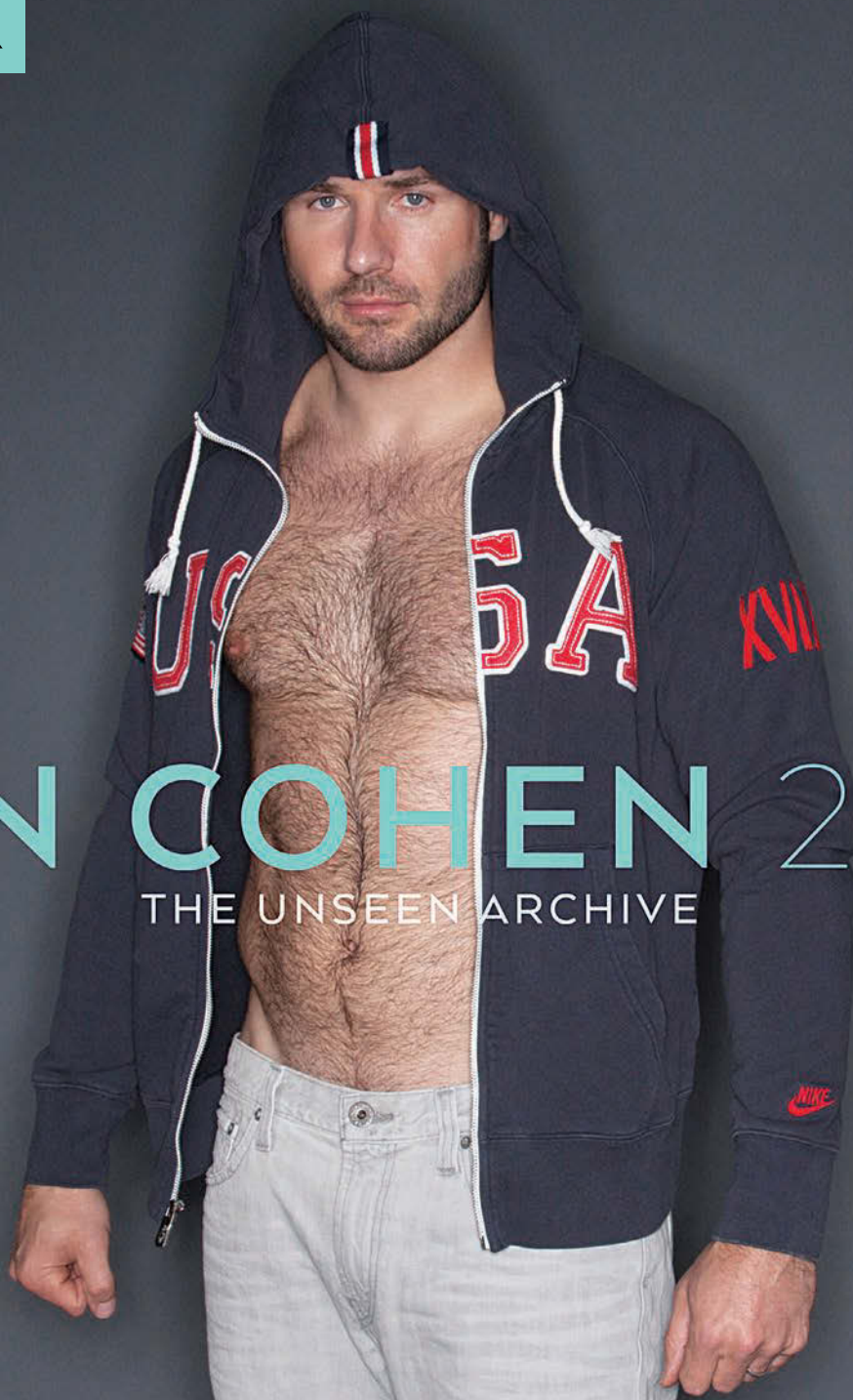
Hat by Nike  
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Socks by Marks & Spencer  
Boots by Calvin Klein Collection





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# COMING OUT TO PLAY

WORDS DANIEL MARTIN IMAGES DANIELLE LEVITT

**BEFORE ANYONE ELSE, ROBBIE ROGERS LED THE PACK WHEN HE CAME OUT FOR OUR TEAM. IT'S WHAT MAKES HIS NEW BOOK THE MOST IMPORTANT GAY SPORTING MEMOIR YOU'LL EVER READ**

**Face it, we're all blessed to live in** a world where, if the battles about being gay and it not being an issue aren't quite won, things are certainly easier than they've ever been before.

It's easy to get dismissive of the often-trotted-out rants about the spheres where we're supposedly not accepted. Like hip-hop, Essex, and, of course, professional football. But then, just imagine being driven to give up everything you'd ever worked hard for, simply because living a lie had become intolerable. And – based on everything you'd ever experienced – coming out was simply not an option.

It really needs hammering home how brutal and bleak the situation was that Robbie Rogers found himself in at the start of 2013. The LA-born winger, at the time just

out of a loan agreement at the UK's Leeds United, announced his 'retirement' from football at the age of 25, moved back to California and promptly came out.

And, as he details in his often-heartbreaking new book *Coming Out To Play*, the two moves were entirely related.

Robbie has returned to football, of course, currently in the middle of play-offs at his new club LA Galaxy, becoming the first out gay man to compete in a top North American professional sports league, and the only one of us in professional football globally – Sweden's Anton Hysén isn't quite as big league. But at the time, he tells us, he never envisaged any of it being possible.

"It's pretty horrible when you sit down and think that there are no other out footballers," says Robbie.

"It's just crazy – there's so many of us! You can even be more broad and talk about out athletes in the world, there's just not that many. Especially in team sports. It's sad that the culture is that way and that athletes are so afraid to be out and be themselves. It sucks. But I was willing to give up all that because I just wanted to live a life where I wasn't afraid to talk about having a boyfriend in the locker room or to have to lie about things. Its pretty sad, I think, but the world is changing."

Tom Daley may have become an emblem, but Robbie is well-aware of the story about the day that the athletes arrived at the Olympic Village and Grindr crashed. He retorts it again with a flirty laugh [it was definitely a flirty laugh, GT was definitely not imagining this





to be the case]. It's such a familiar story that it's barely even worth mentioning why this is the case once again. But Robbie's swift return to football suggests a world where everybody might just be worrying about nothing.

"I was ready to walk away. I had so many mental scars from things I'd heard in the locker room. I expected to retire and never come back. Then I came out, and the same guys I'd heard the most ridiculous homophobic comments from were the same guys who texted right away, or called me and supported me, and I realised the impact I'd make just from being in the locker room and by playing football again. I saw that could make a big difference in the world. Looking back now, it's crazy."

## I HAD SO MANY MENTAL SCARS FROM THINGS I'D HEARD IN THE LOCKER ROOM. I EXPECTED TO NEVER COME BACK. THEN I CAME OUT, AND THE SAME GUYS I'D HEARD THE MOST HOMOPHOBIC COMMENTS FROM WERE THE SAME GUYS WHO SUPPORTED ME

Robbie is quite strikingly candid about what he went through. "I remember there was a discussion of HOW could you even be gay? How could you go through the act of actually liking a man, falling in love with a man, having sex with a man – how could you even do that? If I'm in a locker room hearing that, there's no way I'm going to come out. There's just no way, if guys are thinking this way – and this is happening all over the world – there's no way anyone in their right mind would put themselves in that situation."

And yet his story has a happier ending than certainly he could have hoped for. At Galaxy, he says, there isn't even any 'don't ask don't tell' awkwardness around it. "The guys in my locker room are so supportive.

They know my boyfriend, and we talk about things that are happening in, if you like, the gay world. What's going on in West Hollywood, what's going on with marriage equality and that sort of stuff that doesn't happen in other locker rooms. Now it does because I'm there. That'll only change with athletes coming out – and in order for them to feel comfortable in those locker rooms, we have to change the way that people are talking. So it's really difficult, but in my experience, it happened almost overnight."

Even more encouragingly, he insists that he was never once advised by agents or managers not to come out for the sake of protecting commercial endorsement deals – an excuse often trotted out as a reason gay

footballers refuse to do it.

And yet faced with the question of whether the gay players all secretly know about each other, he insists not. "And that's another interesting thing," he adds. "I haven't had any out footballers contact me. I had different athletes and celebrities and actors, actresses and whatever – but I'd never had any contact with a footballer. It just shows how afraid people are."

But he does believe, now that it's all happened, that his fears of coming out in the UK game were unfounded – as different as the climates of footie and the UK and 'soccer' in the US might be.

"I was afraid to do it, and I wanted to go back to the US and be closer to my family. But if I was a more

courageous person... I'm sure that there'll be a British player that does it. It's definitely possible. I went back to Leeds last year just to go to a game, and I got a standing ovation from the fans. And that's up north! So I think, most fans would definitely be supportive."

The wall of silence, he says, means that the gay players there inevitably are don't all necessarily know about each other. That may be him being diplomatic, but as it stands that's one fantasy we'll need to leave to our imaginations for now. But changing that situation is simple.

"I think with football, it's just that sports room mentality where guys say things to get a laugh, or they say things they think the other guys want to hear. And it's very surface level when you're in the locker room just joking and all the banter. Obviously, they're not homophobic, but when these guys get in the locker room, they behave like little kids. There's no censor and they say things they'd never say around anyone. It's not just homophobic things, it's across the board. There's time for banter, of course. We still banter and the guys joke with me, and you have to be able to laugh and not be too sensitive. But there's a time and a place and there's a way to talk about things. So before I came out I can tell you that, most of the time, it wasn't just banter, it was things that would really scare you. You feel the difference. Again, it just goes back to educating people."

With his story out in print, there may be a time when Robbie no longer has to step up to the plate as a role model. For now, his head is in play-offs and he's looking forward to a "fairly boring" Christmas with his boyfriend and family. After the last two years, "boring" is a right that Robbie Rogers has well earned. ■

Coming Out To Play is out now, [robbiehrogers.com](http://robbiehrogers.com), [@robbiehrogers](https://twitter.com/robbiehrogers)







**It's recently come to our attention that Nick Jonas got hot. Really hot. The former Disney star has done a tasteful Miley transformation, and is grabbing as much gay attention as he can. Do you really blame us for giving it to him?**

WORDS BOB HENDERSON





**We're sat in someone's office at Universal Records.** A secondary TV crew has just dismantled their equipment and we're admiring the walls. A couple of gold discs from Nicki Minaj, some thank you notes from Robyn, Florence Welch and an entire wall dedicated to Grace Jones. There's pop history literally dripping down the walls. And in walks Mr Jonas – the youngest of the band of three famous brothers – and shakes our hand with a wry smile, giving nothing away. He's a vision of black leather which, before you start fantasising, is not the Tom of Finland image we're painting it as. The look is stylishly off set with a pure white hoodie. A discreet zipper hints at a punk rock bondage appropriation, but it's more high end fashion than

as they went crazy. Blogosphere riled up, the reality is he just took his shirt off in a club. We ask him what's been the gayest thing he's done in the run up to the album.

"The gayest thing I've done? Probably going to the gay clubs. I went to about two in the city and it was really fun, it was a really good time and I think more male artists should do that. It's amazing and nice to be a heterosexual male, but be comfortable enough to embrace that and show them all some love."

We'll be honest, there was a part of us that felt a bit stunned by the honesty of Nick's description of 'Phase Two' of his career – a systematic reprogramming of his reputation by adopting a gay audience. But it's a valid point he makes, that there simply aren't

photoshoot with Flaunt magazine. You know the one we're talking about, where everyone suddenly realised that Nick Jonas got hot. Hot, and grabbing his crotch in homage to Mark Wahlberg's 90s Calvin Klein advert. Did Nick notice any specific responses to the shoot?

"Yes. Very specific responses... which was funny. I kind of took it without too serious an approach, had a good time with the shoot and seeing the reaction afterwards is pretty insane. But it was a good time and more than anything it drove people to go buy the music, so..."

What was the funniest response?

"There've been a few, I think, from just people commenting on Twitter and tagging me and their photos with them superimposing themselves in the shoot with me,

# NICK JONAS VERSION 2.0

Malcolm McLaren. Once he's sat in front of us, we don't waste any time. We're from Gay Times, and according to our meticulously researched notes in front of us, it appears that Nick Jonas is having quite a gay time of things himself. He gives a gentle exhale and half-laugh all in one, replying: "I'm having quite a gay time myself, yeah. Definitely met with the team and made an effort in this next phase of my career to prioritise my gay fan base. A bunch of my gay friends came to tell me that it was a big part of the audience and I should embrace it."

He did just that by hitting some gay bars in New York, "just celebrating and hanging with the gay fans," as he puts it, and causing a bit of an Instagram shitstorm

as many straight male popstars opening up to and encouraging their gay fans in the same way. Or certainly to the degree that female popstars do. It must come from a place of security, that Nick knows who he is – he simply says "yeah" in the affirmative during our ruminations – because there's always this snide speculation online, not that Nick seems to care.

"Yeah, I think embracing it is part of it, the core of my audience, and not really caring what anyone thinks. It's kind of the mentality I have and I think it's cooler to just to be that OK with it. I love my gay fans and I'm glad they love me."

Now, one of the reasons Nick suddenly became so popular with the gays is thanks to a certain

things like that. I think it's just the general education of it all, saying 'Look, this is me, what I'm comfortable saying and doing, which you may not have expected, it's who I am.' And it all coincides with the music and what I'm trying to say there. It's been a great process."

The process of personal development has gone hand in hand with his more mature musical sound [we're getting to that, honest] and his acting career. In his first major acting role – let's not count Camp Rock, eh? – he plays a shaved headed MMA fighter in Kingdom. It's set in the decidedly testosterone-filled world of mixed martial arts, filmed while he was doing the recording of his album. His cast mates have

been hinting about a surprising twist at the end of the series, and although Jonas never comes right out and says there's any gay or bisexual action for his character... Well, we'll let you decide. "It's an ensemble cast so there's a bunch of different storylines," he says, "particularly for my character. It's about self discovery and basically he's been fighting all his life and training, and at the beginning of the season the carpet gets ripped out from underneath him and he's got to pick up the pieces. His sexuality is a big question, just sex in general and that whole journey is pretty wild for him. But it's very honest the way we tell it, and I think it's gonna surprise a lot of people."

We love a surprise, the big tease. But we still quiz him for more, like a small child shaking his presents under the tree at Christmas. For the briefest of moments Nick Jonas clams up, then stretches his jaw and opens his mouth, like he's got a really dry mouth, for which he immediately apologises. Or he could've been stifling a yawn, it's been a long day for him. Either way we want to know...

"I think in the sense that this character, this person, he internalises so much in his own life. Some of the pain and the hurt that he's felt from his family or whatever else comes to the surface, but in a moment where he's discovering who he is, so it comes with a lot of questions. It's a really interesting story so you'll just have to watch and see."

No beans are spilled, the cat remains in the bag. He's a pro, but we will say this – you wouldn't be that coy, and the journey won't be so "wild", if all this turns out to be a boy meets girl storyline. We try a different approach, but there was no Stanislavskian inner truth to get at either.

"At times, I have my own specific style and approach when it comes to my process," he says of acting,

"but I don't have to go full method to get the job done, I think I can plant myself in that world and become that person."

Ambiguous character sexuality aside, it's all definitely darker and more adult than his previous purity ring wearing past, and a step forward from his teeny bopper pop career. And since these developments have happened side by side, acting has naturally influenced the next stage of his music career.

"I think any time you touch on an emotional side like we've touched on in this show, you have to really open up and be honest and real, then it affects all areas of creativity. And spending 12 hours everyday on set being this other person, it's only natural that it can carry on into my own life."

Fighting, stripping, crotch grabbing, dancing in gay bars – the thing that strikes us is that somehow Nick Jonas became cool.

"Yeah, I definitely feel cooler. I think that was a big part of approaching phase two, being true to who I am. This is way more natural and organic to me than anything I've done in the past. I do get to start over in a lot of ways, so I'm trying to embrace that."

He's not so much embracing it as tying it up and giving it the full Ann Summers. Take a listen to his lead single Chains, or the brilliantly dark Numb, featuring Angel Haze. But a couple of other songs have crept online with a more upbeat poppy Justin Timberlake vibe – namely Teacher and Wilderness. "There are tracks on the record that are darker than even Chains," Nick explains, "so it's probably somewhere in the middle, in reality, and I think it's a good representation of where it was all going without limiting the set up of this record with one track."

"So often that happens when people only hear one song. How're you supposed to go and buy a

record if you've only heard one song? I feel like you need to be introduced to the whole project and what you're trying to say, so Chains and Jealous being out there now, these other songs coming out, I think you get a good vibe for where it's all heading."

How dark does it get?

"There's a song called Nothing Would Be Better, which I think touches on the darkest element of it all, but it's my life in this last year and a half and how it's evolved, and how that's changed. It's really personal to me this song and I think one of my favourite on the record." Unfortunately, you'll have to wait until next year when the album is out to hear that one.

There's a lyrical theme to his last single and Numb, in that Nick manages to make being in love or a relationship sound quite torturous. Luckily, this observation makes him laugh.

"I'm in a happy relationship so I don't understand why the music reflects that, but at times when you're being creative, you have to touch upon the darker elements to get your point across. With these songs that was definitely the case, exploring that side of things."

We've barely begun to make an indentation in the sofa before we're being ushered out again, and we ask Nick for his final message to his gay fans. "I think I'd just say thank you for supporting me, the love and looking forward to this journey and, more than anything, having a good time. From the TV show to the music, there's a lot here for everybody, but specifically the gay audience as well. They can grab onto it and come on the journey with me." Well, Nick, you don't have to ask us twice. ■

Nick Jonas' new single Chains is out on 5 January, his self-titled debut solo album is available to pre-order now. Kingdom is available to watch through DirectTV, [kingdom.directv.com](http://kingdom.directv.com), [nickjonas.com](http://nickjonas.com), @nickjonas





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# jingle bell jock

Whereas most of us dream of a white Christmas snuggled up cosy by the fire, there are parts of the world where there's a different kind of heat making the gays perspire. Following on from its uber-sexy Miami collection, US-based underwear label Garçon Model introduce a new line of jockstraps just in time for the festive season. The bold colours and, ahem, cheeky styles are destined to brighten the darkest of winter days – and your pants drawer! Available now from [garconmodel.com](http://garconmodel.com) ■

[12/14]

# stocking fillers

**Who doesn't crave a bit of winter sun?** Make sure your loved one's eyes are protected and perfectly framed with these sunglasses from Police Lifestyle ■ [policelifestyle.co.uk](http://policelifestyle.co.uk)



**STORM WATCHES**  
The one thing you can't buy is time. What you can invest in though, is an exquisite piece of wrist bling! Storm Watches' current collection boasts a style to suit everybody. ■

[stormwatches.co.uk](http://stormwatches.co.uk)

**Socks appeal** The London Sock Company's unique subscription service means that this really is the gift that keeps on giving. A brand new pair of stylish socks delivered on a monthly basis. Ankles have never been so attractive! [londonsockcompany.com](http://londonsockcompany.com)





**Hi Arron. How old are you and where're you originally from?** I just turned 27 in October. I'm originally from The Isle of Wight but moved to London five years ago when I got accepted into drama school. The island is a lot different to the city!

**We bet! Where were you scouted?** Was it somewhere glamorous like JFK airport a la Kate Moss, or somewhere less so, such as Primark like Jourdan Dunn?

**I was scouted by photographer, Dimitris Theocharis, on one of my many nights out with friends. It's kind of changed my life.**

**What do your friends and family think of you taking up a career as a model?** You're certainly in your pants a lot... They're very supportive and proud of everything I do, which is so, so great.

**You're obviously very handsome. How do you find any unsolicited male attention?** Depends what you mean. If it's a man in an anorak following me home on a dark night, that's quite freaky [laughs]. But other than that I find it very flattering.

**Can you describe your typical day?** Is it all private jets, champagne and caviar?

**Far from it! My day always starts with a cup of tea as standard. I love my**

**tea! I'll then check my e-mails and begin to wake up. I always try to have a good breakfast in the morning to fuel my day, I think it's very important. I'll then do a work out for an hour or so. Depending on the day, I might then have to dart around London for various castings and auditions. Then it's back home to cook dinner and perhaps a horror movie with most likely another cup of tea. Can't beat a good scare!**

**If you ever need someone to hide behind you know where we are! What would you do for a job if you weren't a model?** Well, I'm an actor as well, so I think I'll always want to be doing something creative. I trained as a carpenter for three years when I left school, but it just wasn't for me.

**Very different to pouting for a living. You must've had some great experiences as a model though?**

**Indeed! My best modelling experience was when I was on a shoot with Lara Stone [the supermodel and Mrs David Walliams]. It was amazing! She's so beautiful and down to earth. Not to mention a true professional, which is always important in this business. ■**



**Model Behaviour** Been thinking about a career as a model? Reckon you could take your Instagram selfies to a professional level? We chat to London-based model Arron Simmonds who's signed with PRM Model Management. And no, it's not just because he looks brilliant in his pants...



## HOW TO DRESS FOR NEW YEAR'S EVE

-----  
 If there's one night of the year you're allowed to dress up, it's New Year's Eve. And this season, retailer Next has pulled out all the stops with their tailoring offering. Not only have they bagged male supermodel – and favourite of Dolce and Gabbana – Sean O'Pry to front the campaign, the slim fitting silhouettes are guaranteed to leave you looking svelte. Even if you HAVE indulged in an extra mince pie, or 12...  
 -----

**Tip one** Shun the shirt and opt for a roll neck jumper. You'll channel that iconic 60s silhouette made famous by James Bond while embracing one of the key trends of the season. Now, will you have your martini shaken or stirred?  
 -----

**Tip two** Matching the colour of your base garment with your blazer is another great way to make the standard suit more contemporary. And we all know wearing one block colour has slimming properties, so enjoy yourself at the buffet! The diet doesn't need to start until the day after.  
 -----

**Tip three** If you opt for a plain suit, add some excitement with a pop of colour at the ankles. Socks in bright hues such as seasonal mustard yellow, sky blue and berry red will certainly get you noticed as you perform your pirouettes on the dance floor. ■

Available now in stores nationwide, [next.co.uk](http://next.co.uk)







**Topman  
Heritage  
hat and  
scarf**

Yes, it's a cliché, but you really can't go wrong with a classic hat and scarf set. Topman have nailed 'nostalgic chic' with this knitted pairing. ■

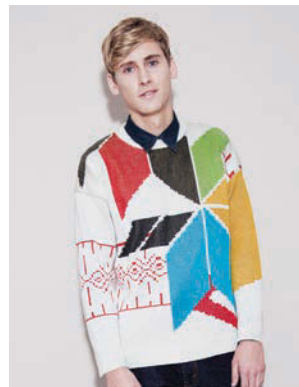
topman.com

**Jolly clothing** We thought the fad of novelty Christmas wear would've worn off by now, but this year it seems more popular than ever! Luckily, Jolly Clothing create lightweight jersey options as an alternative to the traditional heavy-knit jumpers, meaning you won't break a sweat while you're slaving over that turkey. ■ jollyclothing.com



**Snowflake** Kopparberg are better known for the sweet Swedish ciders, but this winter they've teamed up with Shoreditch designers Leutton Postle to create knitwear. The Kopparberg jumper is designed to go with their spiced apple drink, but we probably won't have the two together. We'll only spill it. ■

£150, available at Machine-A, London







Jumpers by Heritage at Blue Inc

PHOTOGRAPHY GRAHAM MARTIN  
STYLING ANDREW WHITTY  
GROOMING REBECCA ROJAS  
MODELS JAKE AND JORIS AT SAPPHIRES MODELS  
LOCATION JAMES BERNARD FLORISTRY DESIGN, LONDON

# It's the season...



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Christmas and all its  
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that you don't have to.**

Jumpers by HYMN



Hat and scarf by Heritage at Blue Inc.  
Underwear by Emporio Armani

Wrap-around scarf by Bershka  
Underwear by Calvin Klein



Jumpers by Bershka





Underwear by Versace



Long-johns by Tommy Hilfiger  
Jumper and underwear by Blue Inc.



T-shirt by Emporio Armani  
Lounge-pants by Bjorn Borg



Underwear by AussieBum  
Socks by London Sock Company



Underwear by Tommy Hilfiger



[12/14]

# grooming



**Christmas – it's the bomb!** The bath bomb that is, with a fairly extensive array of seasonal ones on offer from Lush – as well as bubble bars, soaps and melts. Their biggest bath set, The Nightingale, contains 20 bath products. And if you don't have a bath, they offer shower equivalents – we recommend their White Christmas collection. ■

Gift sets from £7.95 to £155, [lush.co.uk](http://lush.co.uk)

**Grooming on the go**  
These remind us of those mini boxes of cereal... Dinky miniature versions of all the Calvin Klein classics make this, naturally, the perfect stocking filler. ■

Calvin Klein Mini Coffret for men, £29, from World Duty Free stores at UK airports.

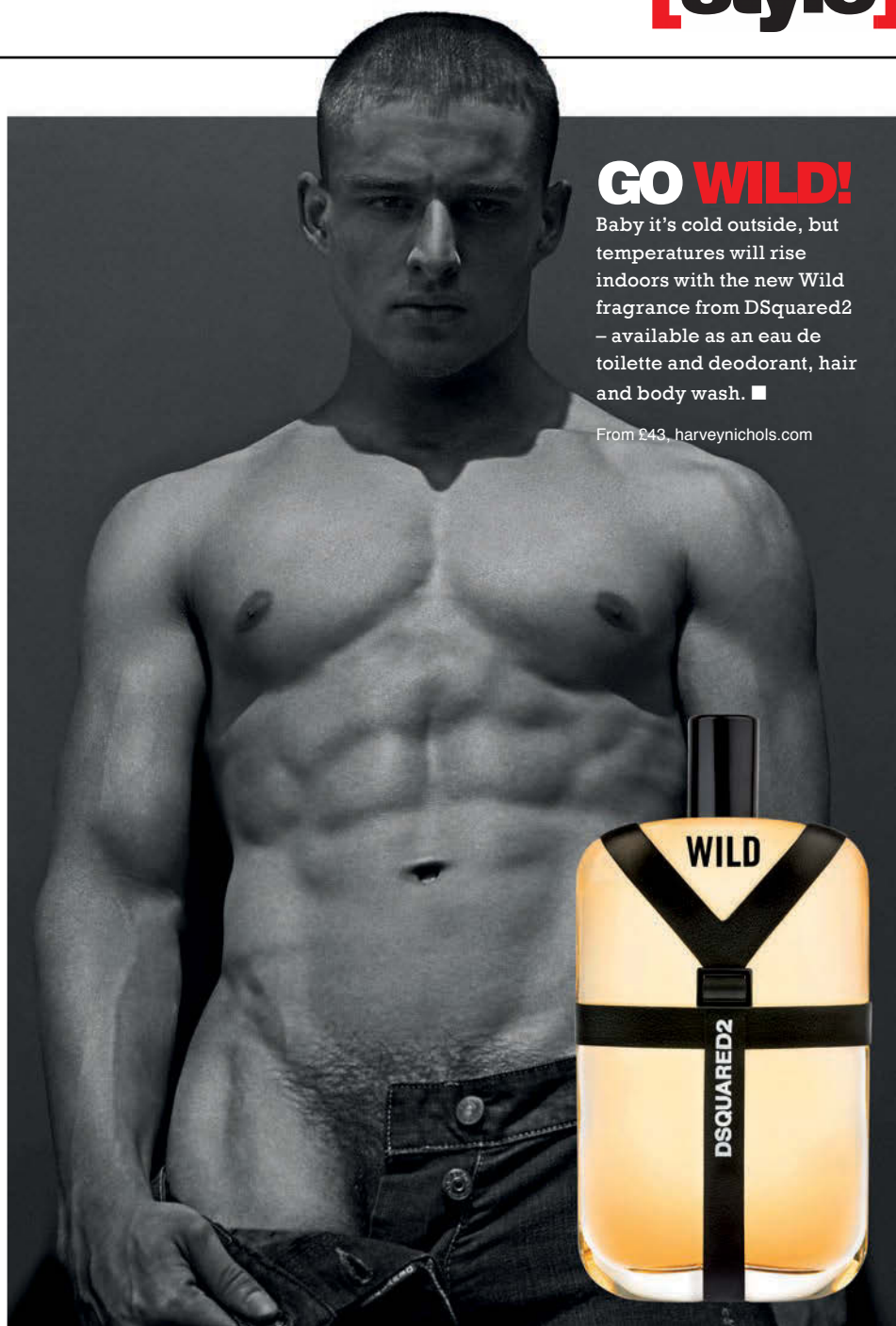






## SHAVING: THE NEXT GENERATION

Remington launch Smart Edge just in time for gifting – with 100% waterproof technology to allow you to shave while you shower, as well as boasting their closest shave yet. Available in two cordless models. From £129.99, Boots, Argos and Amazon ■



## GO WILD!

Baby it's cold outside, but temperatures will rise indoors with the new Wild fragrance from DSquared2 – available as an eau de toilette and deodorant, hair and body wash. ■

From £43, harveynichols.com



**Skyn is in** Yes, it really is a **Face-Lift in-a-Bag** – for that is its name and that is its purpose. This weekly treatment to turn back the clock is the perfect pick-me-up in the party season. ■ £15,

marksandspencer.com



**My anaconda don't want none...** Rodial's glamoxy snake mask is a jet black, peel-off face mask that deep cleanses, reduces pores and brightens your skin. And if that's not enough for you,

it's their special peptide, **Syn-ake**, which recreates the venom of **Temple Viper** that we love the most. The best weapon against those pesky expression lines. ■

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[12/14]

*a-meow-zing!***[reviews]**A full-page photograph of Nicole Scherzinger as Grizabella in the musical Cats. She is in the foreground, wearing a large, shaggy, grey and brown fur coat, looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. In the background, another performer in a colorful, feathered costume is visible, slightly out of focus. The lighting is dramatic, with a dark background and some blue and green hues.

**Pussy Galore!** When she's not busy selling yoghurts, Nicole Scherzinger is a bona fide, chart-topping pop star. And this December will see the former Pussycat Doll make her West End stage debut as Grizabella in Andrew Lloyd Webber's Cats. The musical makes its return to London at the Palladium, with a 12-week run from 6 December. And hey, look at that, we didn't even need to use "shamazing" once...

Tickets are priced between £20 and £59.50.  
[catsthemusical.com/london](http://catsthemusical.com/london), [london-palladium.co.uk](http://london-palladium.co.uk)



## David Guetta

### Listen

This album should be titled David Guetta and friends, so extensive is the featuring list. Most of these collaborations follow the format of a Titanium part two, going roughly thus – things start with a simple guitar/keys riff of no more notes than fingers on your left hand, then a slowly-building bass drum beat doubles up before pole vaulting the whole song into the chorus, where a stupendous synth line – ideally on a Happy Hardcore setting – attempts to burst your eardrums. It's a fail safe method to bake a Guetta banger, but leaves little surprises. Formula aside, you're left with Nicki Minaj actually singing, Ladysmith Black Mambazo totally Guettified, two reggae moments never too far from a dubstep breakdown, Emeli Sandé doing a diverting gospel Sister Act, Ryan Tedder doing himself, one of Sia doing herself, one of Sia to formula and a strange weepy duet. Cynics will point to a lack of creativity, sure, but put on Yesterday, featuring Bebe Rexha. Does it sound like Avicii's You Make Me? Yes. Does it sound like Dolly Parton in the club with a backing orchestra? Yes. Ridiculous and sublime, it's the saviour and damnation of everything David does. ■■■■■■

## Mary J Blige The London Sessions

As far as gaining new audiences and retaining integrity goes, this is a masterclass. On the one hand, you've got bang on trend 90s dance music gone modern, as imagined by the Disclosure collaboration. On the other, you've got raw and emotive BBC Live Lounge tracks, except that she's not doing covers. Masterful. ■■■■■■

## The Czars Best Of

The band before John Grant broke loose and became a gay troubadour, the songwriting here is more pleasant and indie, pitched between

Radiohead and Rufus Wainwright, and altogether more cheerful. As the album progresses in chronological order, so does the emotional intensity, increasing to a more recognisably Grant-esque conclusion. ■■■■■■

## DEMS Muscle

**Memory** With all the sparse emotion and pained delivery of Bloc Party, but layered over glitchy electronica, the debut from DEMS is spacious and oddly soulful. Each track is filled with a kind of aural dry ice, evocative of big empty warehouse spaces in the same way The xx made being moody cool. ■■■■■■



**One Direction Four** The lads are charging down the folk-pop path paved by Story of My Life, as you'll find plenty of sequels such as songs like Ready To Run. Add to this the 80s soft rock that came with lead single Steal My Girl, and the boys career into Bruce Springsteen territory, or Journey half way through a Glee mauling. Listen to Where Do Broken Hearts Go if you don't believe us. Of course, the Ed Sheeran-penned 18 is a fragile acousto-ballad, whereas Girl Almighty sounds like Arcade Fire dropped in as their backing band. With round Four, much like their facial hair has developed at a pleasing rate, so have their tunes. ■■■■■■



**McBusted McBusted** The Buy One Get One Free boyband have launched with debut single Air Guitar, which sets the comedy pop-rock tone – like The Darkness but with slightly better hair. Elsewhere, the guitar-wielding pop-loving boyband – literally what you'd expect from the amalgamation of Busted and McFly – veer between catching numbers like Get Over It and sensitive but banal love ballads like Beautiful Girls Are The Loneliest. Where they surprise is in Green Day covers band mode, with the American Idiot-style punk romp of I Hate Your Guts, but the overall effect is a bit more Smash Hits! than Kerrang! ■■■■■■



**B**reaking up is never easy, Lena Katina knows. Especially if you were band mates, friends and in a pseudo-lesbian relationship. In 2011, she parted ways with Yulia Volkova and dissolved Russian global pop phenomenon t.A.T.u before going on to launch a solo career, releasing her debut album *This Is Who I Am*.

"We were not really in a good relationship," she tells us. "It was no relationship at all. We didn't talk. It was really weird, but I think we got so tired of each other that we weren't in touch in any kind of way. So then I went to LA and started a solo project..."

This meant that Lena had to take up the reigns, something she struggled with at the start. "It was a really tough road to become the leader of the band," she says, "to have four people behind me and to start writing my music, not only to say 'I like this song', but to actually put myself into the music." The resulting album is a potent mix of dramatic rock songs, and even a few fancier pop numbers which have been very well received at GT HQ. Songs like *Something I Said* and *Fed Up* are slowly creeping up our most played list.

One of the first fruits of her labour was the farewell song *Never Forget*, which came out in 2011 with an epic accompanying video in which both Lena and Yulia were cremated.

"The idea is that every person needs to move on, and before you open a new door you've got to close the old one," says Lena. "The video was pretty brutal maybe, some people would say, but I think, from the artistic point of view, it's very clear the idea behind it."

There's actually a brilliant

moment in it where Lena kisses a photo of Yulia, and the whole production is a beautiful accompaniment to her rocky, dramatic power ballad.

"I was actually kind of not happy with that, but they ensured me that it would come across the right way. It was made with love and respect, like 'OK, goodbye, gotta go now.'"

You might have had a t.A.T.u flashback recently thanks to Yulia's comments on Russian TV, saying that she would disown her son if he came out as gay and that she'd rather him be a 'real' man. CHEERS. Lena soon found herself being swept into the subsequent backlash, despite having made no such homophobic comments, and took to Facebook to defend herself.

"I spoke up and said my opinion to stop people from thinking wrong things about me," Lena explains.

"I'm not responsible for another person and that's one of the reasons we broke up in the first place, because it's really hard to be responsible for other people's mistakes. Opinion is opinion, you can't blame people for liking or disliking something, but it's about respect. We've got to respect each other, live and love."

Lena is incredibly diplomatic when talking about her bandmate, and never trashes her, even when they hold differing opinions.

"Yes, I'm a religious person, I do believe in God, but God told us not to judge. God told us to live and love. I love all the people, I don't care if they're gay or straight, it's not about who you have sex with." Lena, this is why you were always our favourite. ■

*This Is Who I Am* is out now, [lenakatina.com](http://lenakatina.com), [@lenakatina](https://twitter.com/lenakatina)



**LENA**  
**KATINA**

**t.A.T.u**

# Storm in a Teacup

WORDS MARK KING

**EF Benson's deliciously waspish books about bitter social rivalry in pre-war England have been adapted for screen for the first time since the 80s – and by a member of The League of Gentlemen, no less. So, as you'd expect, GT was invited round for tea and a good old gossip with Mapp and Lucia**

**Strolling through the picturesque** Tilling churchyard towards Mallards House for tea, we pass Mr Georgie and nearly clash shopping baskets with dear Diva.

Of course, this isn't really the fictional town of Tilling – we're in Rye, on set, as the new adaptation is being filmed.

But, in a twist, this actually is the fictional town of Tilling. Author Benson was Mayor of Rye during the early 30s and wrote the books while living here. He used the exact geography of Rye for his fictional town, with all his characters living in real houses that exist in the locale. It may be a contained world, but one Benson wrote about very richly.

"EF Benson has a very individual voice. Very camp," says Anna Chancellor, who plays arch snob Lucia. "I'm quite familiar with gay writers from the 1930s and enjoy that world. It's a very articulate, funny world."

Permission was granted by all the current residents to allow filming

in and around the actual houses featured in the books, including Benson's own Lamb House, the jewel in the crown and the fictional Mallards. The BBC also worked very closely with the National Trust to reconstruct the infamous Garden Room, an integral location in the stories, but sadly destroyed by wartime bombing.

"It's extraordinary to actually film within the tiny world that EF Benson wrote about," says Anna. "Everything that occupied him and fascinated him, it's all here. It's like a ready made set. It's absolutely beautiful."

And it's outsider Lucia renting Mallards for a holiday that ignites conflict in the fictional Tilling. Arriving with a haughty elegance – and seemingly endless entertaining budget – she attempts to steal social dominance of the town away from its more parsimonious reigning queen, Mapp. When Lucia decides to stay permanently, Mapp has to constantly defend her crown from

the interloper, with the whole town getting caught in the crossfire.

"Lucia is terribly overbearing, snobbish, dominant – and a total fraud," laughs Anna. "Everything is fake about her. Speaking Italian, playing the piano... She can only do a tiny bit of everything. Mapp is always trying to expose her."

Playing Lucia's nemesis, Mapp, is Miranda Richardson. With her pedigree of playing strong, if unstable women – Queenie in *Blackadder* and neurotic minimalist Bettina in *Ab Fab* – her portrayal of the constrained battle-axe who can turn very nasty, very quickly is award-worthy.

"Mapp and Lucia are cut from similar cloth," says Miranda. "Both are competitive. Their war is very satisfying for the both of them and they become a codependent couple in a way. You can't imagine one without the other."

Anna agrees. "Mapp and Lucia are alpha females. They need each other – and their fight – to feel alive."











By Lucia's side during the battle is devoted Georgie, her 'forever young' flamboyant companion, who secretly dyes his hair and is an expert at needlework. The duo has to be one of the earliest depictions of a fag-hag relationship in fiction. "Georgie is sort of my gay boyfriend," says Anna.

The role is played by The League of Gentlemen's Steve Pemberton, who also adapted Benson's books for this series. With typical fervour, Steve has shaved his hair so he can effectively wear Georgie's infamous ill-fitting toupée.

It's rare that GT gets asked to tea with Georgie in Tilling, so we can't help but be flirtatious. How does he manage to look so wonderfully young? "Oh, it's all natural!" cries Georgie, hiding his hairline with an elegantly-gloved hand.

Steve has had a love of the original books since college, and is thrilled to be sharing screen time with old pal Mark Gatiss, who plays gruff and boozy Major Benjy. Obviously, with his writing work on *The League of Gentlemen*, Steve understands the strength of character comedy that can emerge from a small town.

"It's the humour of social one-upmanship," says Steve. "Any small community will have those universal things going on – and that's what I love about it. It's all through smiles, and every 'dear' and 'darling' is actually a dagger. It's a war through smiles and I've always loved that kind of humour."

The battlegrounds may be dinner parties, summer fêtes and amateur painting exhibitions, but the social war the two ladies wage is nevertheless fearsome.

"It's very dark, in a way," says Steve. "It's awful what they do to each other, but in a very cosy fashion. It's definitely a bitter war. And, as a character watching this spectacle, Georgie just loves it."

We wonder if there's some of

Benson himself in the character of Georgie.

"There could well be," muses Steve. "He had a lot of duchesses come to stay and he revelled in the eccentric company of these moneyed, crazy women. It's assumed that Benson was gay. There were six offspring of the Benson family, none of them ever married and they were all assumed to be gay or lesbian. So Benson wrote a lot about female friendships and male friendships."

Considering their father was the Archbishop of Canterbury at the time, Benson and his sibling's relationships were surprisingly liberal. And so too was his immediate social circle.

Again, Benson's real life in Rye informed his fiction as writer, and poet Radclyffe Hall lived locally to him. She was openly gay, dressed in suits and is believed to be the inspiration for another Tilling character, quaint Irene.

Irene is a modern artist, smokes and dresses like a fisherman, and has an overwhelming 'affection' for the elegant Lucia.

Gemma Whelan, fresh from *Game of Thrones*, plays Irene and thinks the character may also represent another side of Benson. "Because Benson was gay himself, Irene may also be his voice within it," she suggests. "She's the disgrace of Tilling. Outspoken, says what's on her mind and is the one person who can see through everybody and call a spade a spade."

After a charming – and thankfully bunfight-free – tea party in Tilling, we grab a final word with Georgie before begrudgingly getting back to the real world. We suggest Mapp and Lucia is like a very English version of *Dynasty*, with two strong women battling for dominance.

"Absolutely," Steve laughs. "Dynasty. But with strawberries and cream." ■

The three-part adaptation is on BBC One over Christmas



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**Ariana Grande has undoubtedly conquered 2014. It started with the Iggy Azalea-guested Problem, before charging in quickly with the massive DJ Zedd hit Break Free. Oh, and we can't forget Bang Bang, which found her sandwiched between pop royalty in Jessie J and Nicki Minaj.**

**Somewhere along the way, though, Ariana got branded a diva. But when we meet her for our interview, it's clear that the bright-faced, wide-eyed and obviously high-ponytailed young thing in front of us is anything but. She's one of the most excitable, enthusiastic and funny young women we've ever had the pleasure of interviewing. And, a bit like when a Mogwai comes into contact with water, Ariana is positively energised by all things gay.**

**As we await her next single Love Me Harder becoming her next smash hit – it's merely a formality – this year's unquestionable queen of pop talks to us about boys in cat ears, defending her gay brother Frankie against homophobic trolls, and why GT is the best magazine in the world... As Ariana would say – werk.**

-----  
**We're here to talk about Love Me Harder. Like our other favourite song from My Everything, Break Free, it was an almost European pop vibe to it... Yeah, well, working with Max Martin [Swedish music producer who's worked with Britney and the Backstreet Boys], obviously I feel the Swedish pop flavour would be very present. The great thing about working with him as well is that I get to make it my own, so that was a really cool thing.**  
**It feels a bit patronising for us to say you're growing up, but, y'are.** I literally am! I really am. It's kind of crazy, but I'm an adult now. But it's great and it's fun.  
**Is it weird for you, though? No,**

I've always been more mentally mature than my brother. My brother was always the little kid and I was always the responsible one, the more serious one, of the two of us. Even though I'm very silly and playful! Out of the two of us, he'd always make fun of me and say that I was like 95-years-old. While he was like the little glitter ball running around the house. I guess I'm enjoying adulthood thus far, all 21 years of me.

**Talking about your brother, obviously we're Gay Times...**

I got so excited when they were like, "OK, your last interview of the day is Gay Times." And I was like, "GAY TIMES?!" [Ariana grabs our sequinned trainer, which is resting on our knee] "As in a gay magazine?!" I was like, "OH MY GOD, I'm so happy." So yeah, Gay Times. Frankie.

**Needless to say, we LOVE how you stood up for Frankie on Instagram.** You can talk shit about me all you want, I kinda won't see it. I try not to give in to my ego in that way. I won't care. But if you talk shit about my brother, I might actually throw a stiletto at you. I might throw a sensible black YSL shoe at you.  
**Have you ever thrown a shoe at someone?** No, I'm just kidding. I've never. But that's when all of my Kabbalah practice flies out the window and the loud abrasive Italian comes out, and I start yelling. You can't talk shit about Frankie to me. You just can't. I love him too much.

**What was so great about your response was that it was so – for want of a better word – sassy.** Of course! I mean, here's the thing. I've mixed feelings about the word sassy. When people show passion or strength or are defending something that they believe in or that they love, people are like "Oh, that's sassy," and I'm like, "NO! It's just the truth!" [Ariana slaps the table for emphasis] People really need an awakening when it comes to what they say about people.

Or the little things that they let slip out... I forget what they said, I think they were like "GAY!" or something...

**It was "Homo..."** That's what they said! Homo! And I was like, "YES!" [Ariana nearly breaks the poor table with another slap] The fiercest, happiest, most successful, most adored and loved homo you'll ever meet! He's so loved and so precious, just stop it! Thank you for reconfirming his sexuality. He knows! You know! We know! Who cares? I couldn't help myself. There've been so many times I've wanted to literally rip peoples' heads off on my brother's Instagram page.

**There's a really long heritage between pop stars and the gay community, and it's almost as if being a female singing sensation automatically makes you a gay icon. Whereas you're actually calling people out and you're on our side.** I can't tell you how passionately I feel about equality. Of all sorts. I don't think of things as a feminist problem or a homophobic problem – there's just people problems. There's too much intolerance, too much hatred based on shit that should never be relevant. I'm such an equality advocate – equality of all sorts.  
**We're clearly with you on that.**

**Anyway, we've got to mention Break Your Heart Right Back [about dating a boy who turns out gay]. We're not particularly bothered about who it's about... The idea that artists should always write autobiographically is nonsense...** Yeah, it's so funny how many questions I get about that song because it's about a boy with another boy. Nobody's like, [in an excited gushing voice] "Who's Best Mistake about?"

**It's surprising there aren't more songs about ex-boyfriends going gay. It obviously happens a lot.** Of course! Yeah! Most of the good ones are gay! [Laughs]  
**Errr, not really, we just got**

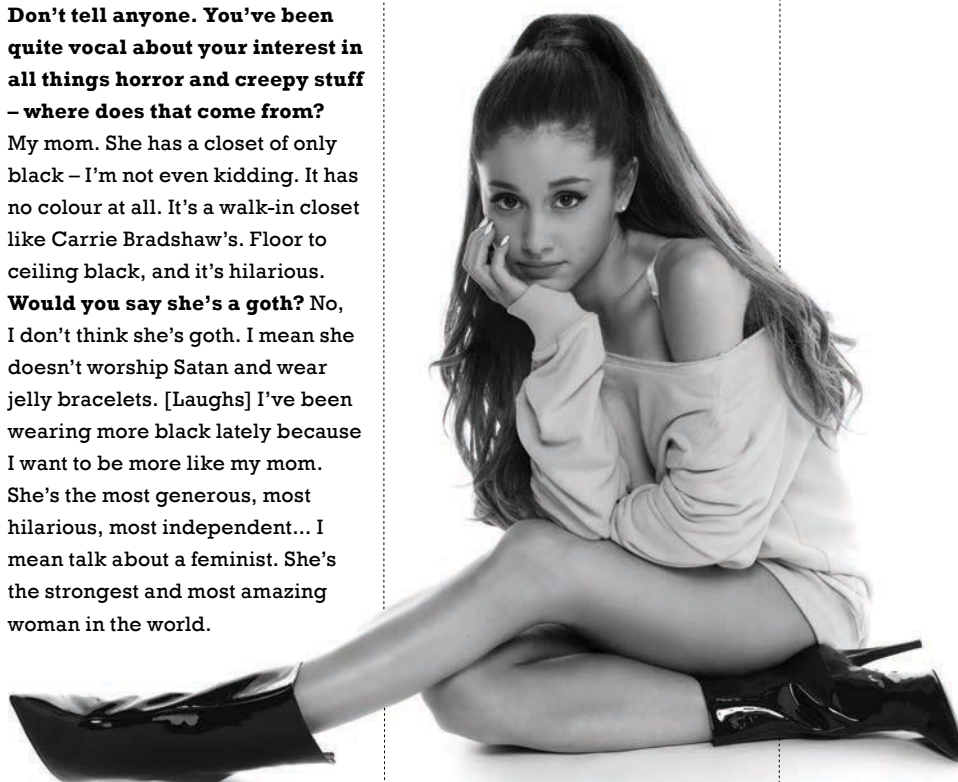


ariana grande

**dumped so we're struggling with that one.** I'm sorry. Watch First Wives Club, that'll get you out of it. First Wives Club, followed by To Wong Foo [Thanks For Everything!], followed by Showgirls. You'll be fine after that. **Showgirls! That's our career film.** That's your goal? Your career goal is to be Nomini Malone and to come out with nipple tassels and give it a can-can moment? That's perfect. **Don't tell anyone. You've been quite vocal about your interest in all things horror and creepy stuff – where does that come from?** My mom. She has a closet of only black – I'm not even kidding. It has no colour at all. It's a walk-in closet like Carrie Bradshaw's. Floor to ceiling black, and it's hilarious. **Would you say she's a goth?** No, I don't think she's goth. I mean she doesn't worship Satan and wear jelly bracelets. [Laughs] I've been wearing more black lately because I want to be more like my mom. She's the most generous, most hilarious, most independent... I mean talk about a feminist. She's the strongest and most amazing woman in the world.

**You've also been wearing a lot of cat ears. Where does the feline affinity come from?** I think all girls look really pretty with animal ears on. And it's playful. I love animals and it's a reminder to not take everything so seriously. Y'know, if you're wearing a really high fashion fierce outfit and you top it off with some cat ears, that are also kind of chic looking – mildly chic looking – it's a reminder to maybe have a bit more fun and not take yourself so seriously. Also it looks cute and you look like a kitten. **Do you think boys can pull it off?** Yes! I met a love at Universal the

other day, I went to the theme park. I guess my fans were expecting to see me there because he had cat ears on and his name was Tom and I was dying. He was so cute and I was LIVING. I was obsessed with him. I also performed in a gay bar in New York and a lot of the boys had cat ears on. I'm a very big fan of boys in cat ears as well, I thought they looked so cute in the audience, just kitties.



**You worked ages ago with Kesha and her mum. Did the fact that she's an animal rights campaigner rub off on you?** Y'know, I definitely felt a connection with Kesha and her mom right off the bat because of that. To me, how a person feels about animals and how a person acts around pets says a lot about them. I don't know if that's something you can relate to or not. **Pugs are alright. Some cats can be really distant...** Yeah, I mean if an animal scratches you in the face you're not necessarily gonna want to take it home. **Get the stiletto out.** No! Definitely

never. I feel you on that, but I definitely felt a connection with them because of that. Anyone who's "Oh, I'd give my life for a dog," I'm like arms open. **Is it too early to think about album number three?** I'm always in the studio. I'm never NOT in the studio. Whether I'm with someone else because they're working on their project, and I'm just offering ideas and cutting back up vocals or working on stuff just creating, I'm always in the studio. "I wonder what Ariana Grande is up to right now?" I'm in the studio. I love making music and I hope I can continue to grow and grow and get better. If I have one successful album, I don't want that to make me rest. I want to just be "Oh, forget about it!" And pretend that every album is my first. **It's a hard act to follow, two number one albums. It's a bit of pressure...** It is, but this is what I'm here for. I feel like I've got a pretty good grasp, but I also really want to continue to push myself to grow, and keep trying to get better and better – because I know I can definitely improve. **And just before we go, here's a copy of the 30th Anniversary edition of GT...** Oh werk! Balloons. Barbra Streisand? Joan Rivers? Sir Ian McKellen?! This is the best magazine in the world! Literally! Bette Midler?! Are you trying to put me in my goddam grave? Oh my God. Where's Bette? Did you see on my album that I thanked her? She was the last thank you, and Bette Midler, why not? She never saw it, I don't think. That's amazing. Oh, werk. Too much. Gorgeous. This is motivating. [Ariana is adoring Conchita Wurst] If he can look like that, why can't I? This is the best magazine ever. I think I am a gay man. ■

Ariana Grande's single Love Me Harder is out 1 December, [arianagrande.com](http://arianagrande.com), @arianagrande



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**Planningtorock** is a curious, gender crushing concept. From the mouth of Jam comes a collision of politics and electronic pop, the likes of which we haven't seen since the days of Bronski Beat. We saw her in a hipster Camden gig recently, with Sarah Lucas frying eggs in the side room, and she had facts and figures projected throughout her performance, listing the amount of countries where it's still illegal to show same-sex love in public. Her last album was called *All Love's Legal*, and her latest EP – released on a USB stick genderless flower, a plastic anthurium – *Gender Baby* carries on her political vision. We're particularly taken by the polyamorous anthem *U&U*, a laid back summery electro-funk jam where she ponders: "Well I'm always in love with at least three people at the same time, usually more but never less..." On *Let's Talk About Gender Baby*, s/he does just that in a playful attempt to deconstruct binaries and the ever present patriarchy. Queer politics never sounded so much fun. ■

The *Gender Baby* EP is out 1 December, [humanlevel.bigcartel.com](http://humanlevel.bigcartel.com), @planningtorock.



**[tracklist]** **Jedward Ferocious** It's no Lipstick, but it's still a high quality Eurovision-worthy entry that's strangely reminiscent of Enrique Iglesias' Europop efforts. ■ **Calvin Harris ft Big Sean Open Wide** This isn't a song about dentistry, and features more questionable lyrics than you'd thought possible on an innocuous club banger. On the plus side, Big Sean is having couples counselling. ■ **Bombay Bicycle Club Home By Now** A sophisticated indie love-in tinged with sadness, bolstered by piano flourishes and some kind of bassy wind instrument. It's a refreshing change from the more heart racing offerings of the charts. ■ **Union J You Got It All** They're The Saturdays of the boyband realm, and continue to operate at that above average, below extraordinary level. What they need is a Flo Rida to come in and shake things up a bit. ■ **Hudson Taylor Chasing Rubies** Handsome guitar twiddling folksters, they're so harmonious even Louis Walsh would have a hard time ruining them. ■ **Clean Bandit Real Love** Back with Jess Glynne on warbling duties, and subsequently back into Rather Be territory. ■ **The Veronicas You Ruin Me** We genuinely missed these girls, and their comeback sees them march into big boo hoo ballad territory. Right up there with the entire Christina Perri back catalogue or Great Big World's *Say Something*. So sad. So good. ■ **Tulisa Living Without You** Her shamelessly Kiesza-esque dance hit is, against all expectations, a bit of a grower. ■ **Marina and the Diamonds Froot** This five-and-a-half-minute-epic is a subtle 8-bit driven disco pop number with a double chorus and umpteen bridges. More is more. ■



**This arty Berliner** and relocated Canadian first caught our attention with his video for *Soft As Rain*, which explored a very hirsute man in all his hairy naked glory. Surprisingly racy for something you can find on YouTube. Once you put aside the erotic visuals, you're left with a sensual

vocalist who sounds like an emotionally and vocally stable Antony Hegarty, but pitched a little deeper. Dan Bodan is essentially an indie crooner, not so much Frank Sinatra but a Chilly Gonzales type, best showcased by his debut album's half way point, on *For Heaven's Sake* – a glorious show

stopping karaoke moment, tinged with darkness. The album juxtaposes his vocals with strange electro, with only one questionable forced union of jungle beats and easy listening. Otherwise the risks normally pay off. Dan Bodan's debut *Soft* is out now on DFA records, @dan\_bodan ■





### Interstellar Cinema

For many a film fan, the merest whiff of a Nolan project can elicit an excitable, near Pavlovian self-soiling. To be fair, with the best reviewed superhero franchise of all time (The Dark Knight Trilogy) and a slew of head-scratchers bridging the ever-elusive indie-mainstream divide (Inception, The Prestige, Memento) under his directorial belt, it's somewhat understandable.

So it's fair to say expectation is rife for this, his first full-on attempt at a sci-fi spectacular. For fear of spoilers, we'll keep the synopsis loose – with a near-future Earth slowly withering away, a crackpot team of scientists (Anne Hathaway, Wes Bentley, Wes Bentley's amazing beard, etc) and one intrepid pilot-turned-farmer (Matthew McConaughey) are sent space-bound on a mission to save humanity. Wormholes, space-time wibbly-wobbliness and a whole host of commendably audacious ideas follow.

Sci-fi fans will implode with giddiness, and while the sweeping scale and awe-inducing cinematography evoke the best of old school sci-fi epics, the woolly meta/astrophysics could test the masses. It's not quite 'masterpiece' status, but Interstellar is undoubtedly the smartest, most epic and emotionally-driven blockbuster of the year. ■■■■■■

### The Circle Cinema

A compelling and unconventional docu-fiction mash-up exploring the world of the eponymous 1940s/50s Zurich gay magazine and cabaret club, The Circle's only downfall is in its ambition. Regardless, it's a moving, engrossing look into a rarely explored world. ■■■■■■

### The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part 1 Cinema

Katniss is back, bitches. And this time, she's really narked off. With Catching Fire cliffhanger-ing with the news that her kind-of beloved Peeta had been kidnapped, and

her hometown napalmed, the franchise kicks into full-on rebel attack mode. Darker, grittier and more explosion-y than ever. ■■■■■■

### Eastern Boys Cinema

Robin Campillo, best-known for writing The Returned and The Class, writes/directs this unpredictable tale that's equal parts love story and home invasion thriller. What starts with a French middle-aged man inviting a young Ukrainian prostitute into his flat only spirals, addressing themes of masculinity, sexuality and immigration along the way. ■■■■■■



### The Case Against 8 Cinema

The fight for marriage equality has been documented in the past, but never before has it been captured with such blistering zeitgeist-y relevance. A HBO documentary filmed throughout the five-year battle to overthrow California's ban on same-sex marriage, it's an accessible entry point into the often-bamboozling take on civil rights in the US, and – like all great documentaries – boasts as many 'stranger than fiction' characters as empathic human interest stories. Passionate personalities, amazing access and a tone that never veers into propaganda guarantee a documentary every bit as compelling and moving as the cause it's championing. ■■■■■■



### Guardians Of The Galaxy Disc

Geek-core aside, few would've thought that the year's best blockbuster would come from a monosyllabic tree, a wise-ass racoon and the artist formerly known as chubby sitcom clown – and henceforth known as hot-DAMN Chris 'sexy' Pratt. The off-kilter tale of a ragtag team of intergalactic rogues forced to come together to stop a magic LED maguffin destroying the universe was a surefire hit – it's now Marvel's third biggest movie – thanks to a stunning soundtrack, snappy sense of humour and fun action. And now there's even more reason to nab it on Blu-ray with a host of extras boasting Making Of's, gag reels, audio commentaries and an exclusive look at Avengers 2. ■■■■■■

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*The Man From Planet X*  
and *Devil Girl from Mars*  
Sun 14 Dec

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Neural Geometry  
movie marathon  
Sun 14 Dec

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## SLEEPING (DOUBLE) BEAUTY

We want to talk about Neil Gaiman. It's possible we're a little obsessed with this New York Times best-selling author – and his latest book, *The Sleeper and the Spindle*. So let's talk. Let's talk Gaiman. He's appeared on *The Simpsons* as himself; he's married to Amanda fucking Palmer, of *Dresden Dolls* fame; has written two episodes of *Doctor Who* and the internationally acclaimed novels *Coraline*, *Stardust* and *American Gods*. Gaiman has a knack for creating unforgettable, iconic characters. Throughout his career as a writer for film and television, fiction and his stand-alone work in comics, Gaiman has made a point of giving thorough and varied representations to gay and transgender characters. Both human and non-human. And we love him. This new novel, *The*

*Sleeper and the Spindle*, is filled with gorgeous illustrations by Chris Riddell, one of which shows us a sleeping princess awoken by a same-sex kiss, although publishers Bloomsbury say this is not a love story between two women. Still, there's a lot to be said for a narrative aimed at young people where the princess is rescued, but this time there's not a charming prince in sight. On the eve of her wedding, a heroic young queen straps on her sword belt and chainmail and heads off to the sleeping kingdom to rescue a neighbouring princess from an enchantment. Like *A. Boss*. Giving a twist to the traditional fairy tale, with a pinch of *Snow White* and *Sleeping Beauty*, but shifting the focus to the strong female characters. Gaiman's storytelling is always transformative. If you think you'd be interested in a story about the strength of women, and the things they feel for one another, from, let's face it, one of the great fantasy writers of the modern day, then get thee to a bookstore! ■

**A 'boat' you can hug!** Of course, by boat we mean spaceship. But you knew that, right? Shiny! Ideal for taking you to that safe warm place if Reavers are approaching. Two tiny wee plush shuttles are tucked into the bays on each side and can emerge for short-range expeditions throughout the galaxy. LOVE. ■

**BTVS Reaction Figures – 90s fun in 80s packaging!** If you've ever wanted a gentleman who'll fit in your pocket – not like that dear! – or your very own magic lesbian, brooding Vampire, or titular Vampire Slayer, now's the time to speak up. Sculpted in the niche vintage style of Kenner's cancelled Alien toy range. ■

**Ghostbusters Peter Venkman Q-Pop Vinyl Figure** He's a doctor who fights ghosts! Well, 'busts' them. You've seen Ghostbusters right? Bill Murray covered in ectoplasm in desk-friendly scale? We're there! He even comes with a tiny whiteboard word bubble for scribbling down quotes and sound effects! ■



### Ooga-Chaka Ooga-Ooga (yes really)

Mondo have put together the ultimate Marvel fanboy must have: a deluxe *Guardians of the Galaxy Awesome Mix 1* soundtrack, available for the first time via the superior sound of vinyl.

It's basically sex. Tyler Stout's gorgeous *Guardians* screen print has been reformatted for the cover, with additional original artwork pressed on 180 gram PURPLE INFINITY GEM STONE coloured vinyl. Hooked on a Feeling, Cherry Bomb, O-O-H Child, Escape (the Piña Colada Song) and other total gems, all wrapped up in Chris Pratt. Any questions? Any takers? ■

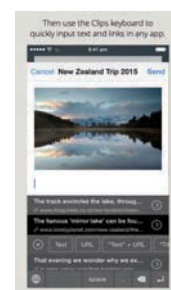




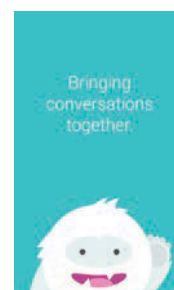


**GAMES**

**[apps]**



**Clips** Even with the advances in iOS8, cutting and pasting still isn't the simple stroke of a finger Apple would like it to be. Enter Clips. This nifty little so-and-so lets you select any area of an app or screen to be cut and pasted, with all cut content being stored on a home screen widget. ■



**Snowball** Essentially acting as an inbox for all your conversations, Snowball is a one-stop communication shop currently supporting Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Twitter and good old SMS messaging – with further updates to follow. ■

**Assassin's Creed Unity  
Game of the Month**

Another year, another Assassin's Creed behemoth but with this iteration, Ubisoft is promising that the next gen starts here – and it's not hard to see why. This time the assassins in question are operating in an incredibly rich revolutionary Paris, complete with entirely climbable, explorable landmarks like Notre-Dame – and handy catacombs that are perfect for a quick escape once your mark has been dispatched. This is Assassin's Creed if not reinvented, then revolutionised. The impressive parkour system has been reworked to allow easier, more calculated descents and ascents – meaning you're no longer reliant on leaps of faith to escape situations. Story missions can be tackled quite literally any way you can imagine, and the fighting has been toughened to make it a more strategic affair. And it looks gorgeous – really gorgeous. You really feel as though your next gen system is being put through its graphical paces in a way that other games haven't quite yet delivered. Added to that, multiplayer allows up to four friends to aid the revolution, and there are side missions aplenty of varying stature that all add to a richly layered, HUGE story that is arguably the most impressive Assassin's Creed yet. ■

Available now on PC, PS4 and Xbox One

**Far Cry 4** It's a big month for Ubisoft as the fourth Far Cry game arrives hot on Unity's heels. Another island, another grandiose despot and this time – wait for it – elephants! Elephants you can ride into battle! Actual elephants. Sold. ■

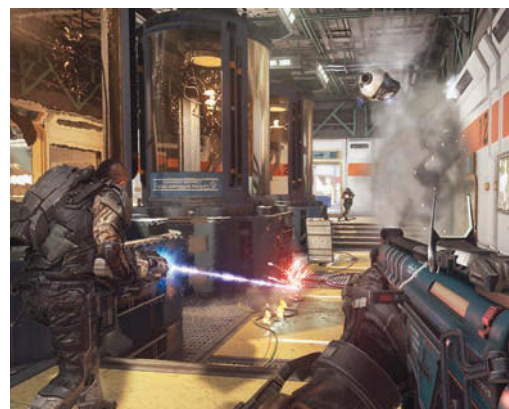
Across formats now



**Call Of Duty:  
Advanced Warfare**

Another year, another Call Of Duty behem... Oh we've done that. Still, gifting season is sequel season, and the big guns are literally out in this latest romp through fictional war zones. With added Kevin Spacey! ■

Across formats now







01

### Money is power

Wallets are a VERY traditional Christmas gift but the SEYVR Power Saver Wallet takes things up a notch by coming packed with a rechargeable ultra slim battery that charges at a computer and gives you an eminently portable battery boost – available in Apple Lightning and micro-USB variants. From £49.95, [cuckooland.com](http://cuckooland.com) ■

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# GIFTED GADGETS

It's that time of year again – you know, when you're expected to buy people presents and get less good ones back in return? Jollity. Anyway, here are some ideas for wallets of all sizes

02

### Sound by design

The brainchild of legendary designer Frank Nuovo, the Spaced360 is a beautiful piece of kit and a fantastic Bluetooth speaker to boot. Using patented airSOUND™ technology, the speaker – as its name implies – creates a brilliantly immersive 360 degree sound. £250, [johnlewis.com](http://johnlewis.com) ■

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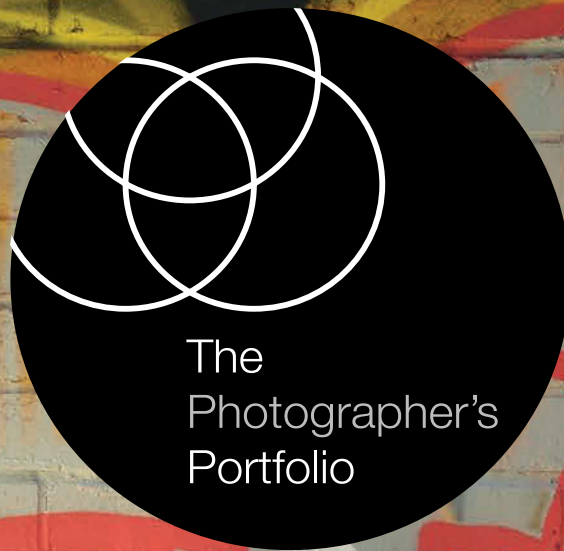


03

### The gift of time

The Pebble smartwatch has got off to a strong start in the US and its ultra-sleek premium variant, the Pebble Steel, has just landed on these shores. Capable of storing eight apps and with a great, easy to read display, this model has design on its side as well. From £179, [firebox.com](http://firebox.com) ■

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**Simon Griffin-Raphael**  
Berkshire, 41,  
teacher

I was nervous to get my clothes off at first. But going into a room and taking everything off in front of people you don't know is liberating. I'm pretty confident with my body now. There's always bits you can improve, and there's bits I'm interested to see how they look on camera – but you have to live with the body you've got. People won't be surprised I've done this! Though I'm not sure if people will recognise me, to be honest. I hope my husband does! I wish he'd have done it with me, but he wasn't brave enough. Whereas I've always done things like this. When I was a youngster I used to go to clubs and strip joints and things, and dark places to do things with people. But I haven't done anything for a while! And stripping off isn't as daunting as the adoption process. It took six years to adopt, and once you have kids, body image and things worry you. My kids shouldn't grow up in a society obsessed by body image, they should be happy with how they are. I meet a lot of young people who won't eat or are unwell with worry about their body, and it's not healthy. Just enjoy what you are and don't hide behind what you want to be. That's what I believe, anyway. ■

readers' lives

**REAL  
LIFE**





## POSITIVE DAMAGE

**There seems to be a common misconception surrounding HIV that it's a disease rooted firmly in the 80s, affecting only those who lived through an age of Section 28 oppression. While we can only speak anecdotally, of course, more often than not, young gay and bisexual men feel like they're immune from catching it. But they're wrong. HIV doesn't discriminate. It doesn't care about your age, your upbringing, your political beliefs or what you do for a living. Simply put, if you have unsafe sex, you're putting yourself at risk of a lifetime affliction. That's what millionaire Philip Christopher Baldwin found out. He's an associate at one of the world's largest law firms, White and Case, who just so happens to collect fine art in his spare time. Oh, and in 2010, at just 24 years of age, he was diagnosed with both HIV and Hepatitis C. Now, in a prelude to his memoir *Positive Damage*, due to hit shelves next year, he tells GT how he took charge of his life after his diagnosis and how others like him can do the same**

WORDS RYAN BUTCHER IMAGES THE IRISH WOLF



**IT ALL STARTED IN 2010, WHEN** I was 24-years-old, and diagnosed with HIV and Hepatitis C. It was very challenging for me at first, but over the last five years it's something I've been able to incorporate into my identity and it's actually come to empower me.

I'd gone to the STD clinic on my lunch break at work to be prescribed PEP, because I thought I might've been exposed to HIV a few days before. After being in the clinic for about 15 minutes, the nurse told me that I wouldn't actually need PEP because I was already HIV-positive. I was in a real state of shock. I returned to my apartment, sort of in between the clinic and work, and had about 40 minutes to pull myself together before going back to the office.

I didn't really do much more that afternoon. I sent some e-mails, left and went home. I wanted everything to be as normal as possible and actually ended up going to the gym later that night. I thought that, despite what'd happened, I didn't want to stop being me – I didn't want to stop being this muscular young man who went to nightclubs. I wanted to be that person still and I didn't want to compromise my identity or undermine everything I'd worked so hard for.

Later that night I told my friend Joe. He was the first person I actually told. We had a really long chat about things and he was able to make me feel a lot better about what'd taken place, and I went to bed feeling quite calm about the whole thing. But when I woke up the next morning to go to work, I was feeling

anxious again. I'd decided I wanted to keep it hidden because I didn't want to trouble people in that way. I was listening to platitudes from my colleagues about their journey or which restaurant they'd eaten in the night before, and not telling them that I'd found out I was HIV-positive was incredibly difficult. I felt like I was that person from Edvard Munch's *The Scream*. I wanted to scream, but I couldn't.

About a week later I went to the HIV clinic at the Royal London Hospital, the Graham Hayton unit. I wanted to know more about this illness that was suddenly affecting me. About half an hour into the appointment, they told me I was also infected with Hep C, which was another massive shock. When the appointment began, one of the nurses actually told me that the big thing to concentrate was avoiding Hep C, because it could potentially create complications, so it was a huge blow to then be told I already had that, too.

I was maybe in denial about what was happening to me. And this was exacerbated by not telling my work about what was going on. I was maintaining this facade of being completely happy and healthy. At one point, concealing this from people became so much of a burden that there was a period of several weeks where I'd go to the toilet, lock myself in a cubicle, curl up on the floor in the foetal position and cry. It took me two years to have the courage to tell any of my colleagues that I was HIV-positive.

Towards the end of 2012, my health started to deteriorate and my CV4 count began to fall. It was at this point I felt like I had to tell my work and it was, effectively, my second coming out. The response was generally very supportive. I didn't receive any stigma as such, I came up more against a lack of knowledge. Probably a lot of people in my office had never met someone

who was HIV-positive before and that's why visibility is so important. There's no one else I can think of at a major investment bank, law firm or accountancy practice who's openly HIV-positive like I was. But it is possible to be successful, to work as a lawyer, or as a banker, and still be HIV-positive. So much about my message is trying to let people know that you can be positive and still have a fairytale life.

It was that first year of being HIV-positive that I hosted a supper club for the Terrence Higgins Trust, which was quite a pivotal moment for me. I raised several thousands for charity and doing something like that allowed me to see that there could be something really amazing that could come out

## **As humans, it's our weaknesses and flaws that make us beautiful and, in that way, my HIV and Hep C have made me a more beautiful person**

of me being HIV-positive. Charity work has been really important to me in taking ownership over my condition. I've been chatting to the Albert Kennedy Trust recently and they of course help young, gay homeless people. Some of the stories I hear about young people who're not only kicked out of their home for being gay, but they also have this burden of being HIV-positive too. I managed to get through my HIV and Hep C with the support of my friends, but how awful is it for someone living on the streets who has no one to turn to? It's easy to just walk past people sometimes and not notice them, but charity work has allowed me to help people who're faced with HIV, who aren't from such a privileged background as I am or who haven't

had the same opportunities that maybe I have.

It's interesting, because in the gay community there's a lot of acceptance surrounding HIV, but I think Hep C is more controversial, because people know less about it. It's really important to me that people know that I'm co-infected, because I don't think there are many role models in that sense. I've never encountered any prejudice from gay or bisexual men about my HIV, but with Hep C I think there's a real fear. A lot of people I know who've had Hep C, it's been a real struggle for them. It's so important that people feel they can be open about it. Maybe people just need some more knowledge?

I think perhaps, as humans, it's our weaknesses and flaws that make us beautiful and, in that way, my HIV and Hep C have made me a more beautiful person. They've allowed me to empathise with people who're vulnerable, if that doesn't sound too pretentious. I couldn't do that before. Now I can say something sensible rather than just throwing money at a problem.

If I could go back in time and see myself four years ago, I'd give myself a big cuddle and tell myself everything was going to be OK. I was so frightened of the unknown, but with hindsight, it's worked out alright. People need to remember that it'll be fine, and to listen to your doctor. As well as that, if people are struggling, look to the charities as well, because they can offer some amazing advice. It's only really with solidarity that we can get through it. ■

Follow Philip on Twitter, @philipcaldwin







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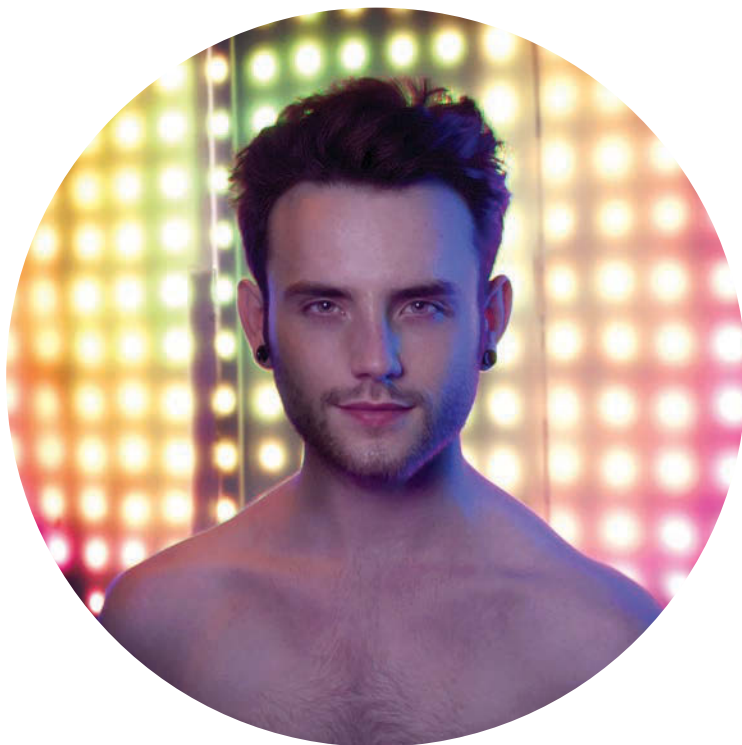
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**“** Since 1988, in the midst of the epidemic, World AIDS Day has been held on 1 December to bring recognition of HIV and AIDS to people all over the planet. It goes without saying that such a day will mean something very different to everyone. But, for those living with HIV like myself, World AIDS Day is not only a personal and almost patriarchal day of recognition, it's also a day of intense remembrance, enlightenment and hope for a continuous progressive future that benefits everyone. For many gay men older than me, 1 December used to be more of a 'second funeral' for the many who lost friends and loved ones in the early days – candle-lit vigils, religious prayers and a collection of warm hugs. All still happens today in a reflective act of memoriam.

World AIDS Day has only been a part of my life for just over a year. Before last year, I'd never have thought such a day would ever play a role in my plans. But now I find myself writing this, proudly wearing a red ribbon pinned to my

shirt for all to see and question. And it's pretty obvious that for the rest of my life, 1 December will always be a very special date on my calendar. While we regard HIV a manageable condition in the UK in the 21st century, in many parts of the world effective medicine is still hard to come by. And while a cure may be some way away, remembering that the majority of people living with HIV all over the world still face difficulty accessing life saving drugs, the word 'World' really does hold a lot of meaning. World AIDS Day is not just about the past – it's equally representative of the strong fight for years to come, in every corner of the globe.

We should see World AIDS Day as another vital chance to educate others that HIV is still very much around, even if it just includes chatting to a friend over coffee about why you're wearing a red ribbon on your chest. Last year, I wore my ribbon to my college, and the amount of people who kept asking me what it symbolised initially seemed pretty worrying. I thought everyone knew what meaning it held, and it really

**We should see World AIDS Day as another chance to educate other that HIV is still very much around, even if it just includes chatting about why you're wearing a red ribbon**

surprised me that I was proven so wrong from within my own generation. When I did tell them, most asked me a lot of questions, and after a few minutes, they would leave the conversation with a newly expanded knowledge, and an awareness of the symbolic meanings that will probably last a lifetime – some even got tested, helping one of the fundamental challenges the world still faces in controlling the spread of HIV.

For me, World AIDS Day is now deeply symbolic and full of meaning – my own personal tribute to the millions all over the world that have experienced the unimaginable news, that they're HIV-positive. To those throughout the decades who've tragically succumbed to HIV/AIDS and to those before me, who never had effective treatment, their lives instantly transforming into a ticking time-bomb; hoping and praying for a cure that never came. To those today, who still await access to healthcare, only to be shunned by the poverty they live in, that denies them a chance at life. And to those whose admirable strength and courage prevail above all on a daily basis. They battled all this, along with the entire stigma that surrounded each one of them. The stigma that still lingers today. I wear my ribbon for them. I wear my ribbon for me. I wear my ribbon to educate – to remind those who've forgotten about the recent past. I wear my ribbon for the present, the struggles that I and 34 million others face daily. But above all, I wear my ribbon with hope; the hope for awareness, the hope for a cure and the hope for a universal change that the future of HIV is something surrounded in empathy and love, and no longer in hate.

We can all make a difference. Please wear your red ribbon this World AIDS Day. ■

@positiveluke





## My boyfriend wants a threesome. I don't

My man and I have been together for 12 years and overall are pretty happy. Recently he's started wanting to change things about our sex life. First it was filming us, which I went along with, then in public places, and we've done that once. Lately he's been changing things again, getting a bit rougher. I don't mind it so much, but now he's saying he wants to get someone else involved and have a threesome. He's been on Grindr talking to guys. He

says he doesn't want to sleep with someone else without me – he's not interested in being unfaithful. If I'm honest, I preferred it when our sex life was more vanilla. He's been through a lot lately – his mum died and as a result there have been family rows. I don't want to let him down but I'm scared if I don't go along with it, it'll be the end of our relationship. And he's the only man I've ever loved. Ali, via email

**The Guyliner replies** Reading this, your dissatisfaction jumps off the page. You talk about your sex life as if it's a process of endurance, something to be "got through" or "gone along with" for the sake of placating and pleasing your man. This isn't the way it's supposed to work. What about your needs? The

key thing here is your partner's recent bereavement. People start acting all kinds of unusual when there's been a death in the family – some disappear into sadness and despair, while others come to the realisation that life is all too short and decide to be more adventurous.

It's true that we may as well enjoy ourselves while we can, and you don't want to live wondering, but your boyfriend isn't considering you while he fucks the pain away. There needs to be compromise in all relationships, but no way should you be spending your time doing things you don't want to do – be it trail round after him in museums, spend eternities watching him try on tops in H&M or, in your case, invite a third person into your bed. You've been kind and patient in indulging your boyfriend so far, but it has to end here – for your own sake.

I'm not saying you should end your relationship, but for you to carry on having sex that's making you uncomfortable and upset is far more dangerous than being on your own. You've been together a long time and it'd be a shame to throw that away, but what's the point in carrying on if your sex life – a vital part of a relationship – is making you unhappy and insecure?

I'm not saying this as a prude; if threesomes are your thing, then great. But they only work when everyone involved is OK with it, and they inevitably bring with them many more issues and problems than a kinky shag would solve. It sounds to me like counselling would be useful, both as a couple and, for your partner, some help coping with the loss of his mother. Relate might be a good start to getting things back on track. You've been a rock so far, but now it's time to look after yourself. ■

@theguyliner

need advice?

Need some good old-fashioned advice on matters of love, life or relationships? Email me in total confidence on [theguyliner@gaytimes.co.uk](mailto:theguyliner@gaytimes.co.uk). I can't respond individually and your emails may be edited for use in the magazine. We won't use your real name or publish any contact details.





# ALL THE MEN YOU SHOULD NEVER DATE

## [01] The Christmas Fairy

The Christmas Fairy just adores the festive period. He starts compiling his Christmas playlist during barbecue season, and wants to talk about table plans and what gifts to get the family before you've even had time to Hoover up the pine needles from last year. Every part of Christmas is an event for this guy, and all broadcast on social media. From July to December now looks like this to you: ice skating, hog roasts, mulled everything, German markets, "red cups, yaaaaaay!", antlers, eggnog on your corn flakes, bad jumpers, sprouts with everything, 'frost fairs' held in multi-storey car parks, advent calendars with cheap chocolate, trudging around Boots buying three for two junk for his pedestrian relatives, tuneless carolling, midnight mass, demanding only "Christmassy" TV or music or games or food or clothes or chat or books or magazines or shagging, the word "Christmassy". And is that...? Yes, it is – there's mistletoe hanging in the loo.

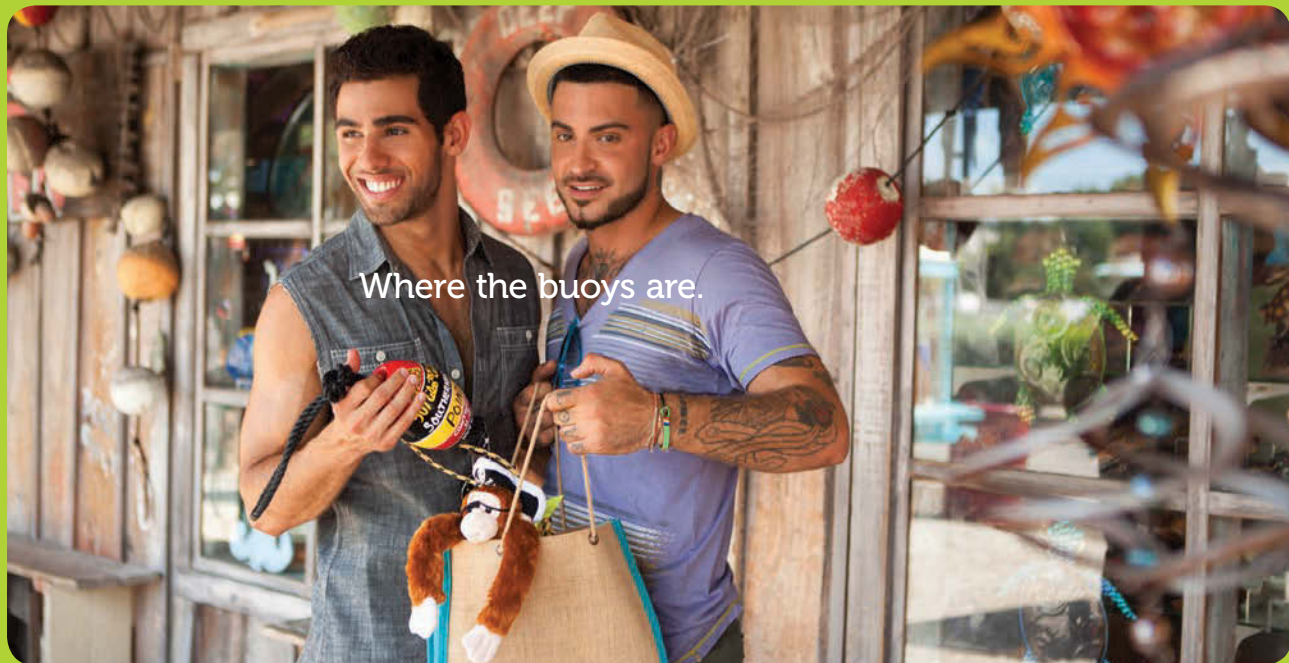
**The solution** You can either throw yourself into the festive spirit and prepare for a lifetime of jingling bells, or attempt aversion therapy – give him an unpleasant, toothy serving of fellatio while wearing a Santa hat. That should fuse a few bulbs on his tree lights. ■

## [02] The Christmas Humbug

But of course, it can all too easily go the other way. "I don't do Christmas," he says, with a scowl that makes your Christmas tree wilt. It's the first of a string of things the Christmas Humbug will tell you they DON'T do. He doesn't do presents, not even for his

dear old mum, and he will turn down every invitation to festive drinks. He doesn't pretend to like mulled wine like everybody else, and the opening bars of Mariah's All I Want For Christmas Is You leave him cold. What a monster. Why he doesn't like Christmas is a mystery – maybe he's not quite got over getting a toy drill for Christmas instead of a Tiny Tears doll. Best not to delve. You think you can change him, make him see how great the holiday season is. You play Santa: buying him a couple of gifts; getting a modest, stylish tree; and introducing him to the Pret Christmas sandwich in the hope it will kick start a tingling in his tinsel. But you're wasting your time. He's on to you. And while he'll be more than happy to accept your gifts – quipping "It's a waste of money otherwise" – he won't return your Christmas cheer. "I'm not chucking away money on stupid presents you'll never use," he'll drone, refusing to sign his name on Christmas cards and exaggeratedly picking out the cranberries you've started lacing all his meals with. You've got to do something because Santa's elves are staring unemployment in the face thanks to this Grinch you've taken up with.

**The solution** Don't bother worrying about whether he's having a good time. Show him what he's missing by accepting every invitation, going absolutely nuts with decorations and buying a tree taller than the Empire State Building. Let Santa empty his sack all over you. He'll either fall in line or, hopefully, leave you in peace and find some other Scrooge to be miserable with. ■



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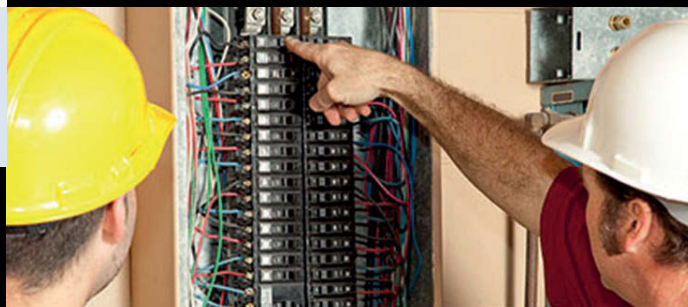
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**“** Recently, I got a gig that brought me to Cardiff for two days of work. Since drama school I’ve had a soft spot for the Welsh; I’ve basically convinced myself that my future husband will be Welsh, and because of this fascination, I obviously extended my visit to more than a week, staying with a friend, and always hoping that Mr Right was around the corner.

Deep into my visit when my love for Cardiff and its people couldn’t have been any soppiest, we went to see *Pride*. It was a great film – appropriately kitschy at points, but with a cast that could just tear your teeth out with acting, they were that good. Russell Tovey was on screen for no more than a minute in total and he basically bludgeoned me over the head with his performance. It’s still haunting me.

Afterwards, my two friends and I had to sit outside with Coronas and discuss the film; there was just no other option. ‘How amazing is it that this true story that was almost lost has been preserved forever in this film?’ My mate asked. I secretly wanted to make the

cynical sequel, *Pride 2: When the Commute Got to Be Too Much*, but even my hard heart was moved by the film. After all, in the 30 years that have passed, we’ve come so far, haven’t we?

Not quite. According to the research I gathered, it’d appear to me that one club in particular, let’s call it Throb, is the epicentre of gay life in Cardiff. Sadly, it’s also one that stays open later than most clubs in the city. So, at around one or two in the morning, the straight boys and girls come to Throb looking for a last minute hook-up or a couple more boogies before calling it a night. Firstly, the DJ is terrible on a Saturday, unless you like *THREE Steps* songs in a row.

Here’s my favourite part of the story: I danced with AND made out with a fitty – I’m bragging. Here’s my least favourite part of the story: my friend got hit in the face by a straight boy while I was... distracted. [Read: tashing off, whay-ey!!]

After the ordeal, after my friend was told he had ‘made it worse’ by chasing after the fleeing boy to catch him, after the owner walked away from my friend as he tried

**I want straight people to feel they can come to a gay bar, but at what cost? In a world that’s still dangerous for LGBTs, do we still not need safe places to be ourselves?**

@peejaybrennan

to tell him what happened, we three found ourselves in my mate’s kitchen, eating toast, waiting for the police to phone back.

‘Of course it was me, it’s always me,’ my friend said, chin in hand. It hurt me, because after the ebullient effect of *Pride* had worn off, we were surrounded by a world that is still VERY unsafe for LGBT folks. In a gay bar, no less, my friend was struck for simply being himself. In Wales, 68% of LGB feel ‘at greater risk of being insulted, intimidated, or harassed than heterosexual people’, four percentage points less than in London, according to Stonewall’s recent surveys. So much for the safety of the big cities, huh?

It affected my friend’s self-worth even if the physical damage was negligible. Films like *Pride* are wonderful, but they skim the surface. Perhaps it’s not that cynical of me to want a sequel. ‘Sorry, we’d love to be at London *Pride* this year, but Lucy’s got the flu and the car is acting up, maybe next year,’ Imelda Staunton’s character could say. And then next year, no contact, maybe? Who knows? Friendships of necessity, we’ve all had them.

Currently, some feminists are having a tough time integrating transgender women into the movement, and in a way, I understand the struggle. I want straight people to feel they can come to a gay bar, but at what cost? In a world that’s still dangerous for the LGBT community, do we still not need safe places to convene and to be ourselves? How accommodating can we be to a general public that still has a hard time tolerating us even existing in their environment? The whole ‘Just don’t do it in front of my face’ thing is the next big hurdle we have to jump over because, quite frankly, if you’re hating the sin, you’re kind of hating the sinner. ■

**”**

[life]

average joe-mo



# MY CHRISTMAS CRACKER

WORDS CHRIS JONES IMAGES LEE ROBERTS

need advice?

Whether you're wanting to look good on the beach, shed a few pounds or just live a healthier lifestyle, email me on [fitness@gaytimes.co.uk](mailto:fitness@gaytimes.co.uk) or tweet me at [@ChrisJonesGeek](https://twitter.com/ChrisJonesGeek). I can't respond to everyone and your emails or tweets may be edited for use in the magazine. We won't publish any contact details.



**It's Christmas time! Mistletoe and wine time!** What? Just because I'm a so-called fitness expert, you expect me to say NO to wine?! Christmas is upon us and I say a glass or two won't do you any harm, surely. Mine's a glass of red, by the way. **WINKY FACE.**

The festive time of the year makes it so bloody tough for a lot of us to keep any sort of shape – apart from the delicate form of a Christmas pudding. The fridge is fully stocked of everything from meat to veg and to booze. All the booze.

It's the one time of year we all have some holiday from work and we should be entitled to let go. But there's ways to stop from becoming the pudding that we could easily be.

My honest festive advice? It's Christmas, enjoy it! All in moderation, of course. While tucking into Christmas dinner, simply cut down on how many roast potatoes you have, and aim for a more high protein orientated dinner. It may seem blasphemous to say, but what about roast sweet potatoes?

But adding more meat and cutting down on the carbs is an obvious way to help fight the festive bulge.

The Christmas period can be the best time to plan for the new year. The new you. You could spend the time off planning your new diet and routine. While you're at it, you can shop around for the best January gym membership deals.

However, if you have a spare moment during the festive period, why not try this little favourite circuit routine of mine? It keeps the muscles pumped, heart working and helps you keep toned up. Perfect for a five or ten day Christmas break.

I call this, my **CHRISTmas Cracker.**

**20 x Press-ups** Your starting position should be with your toes and palms being the only parts of your body that are in contact with the floor. Looking straight ahead, and keeping your bum in, move slowly towards the floor.

Your elbows should be slightly bent and should come down to no more than 90 degrees when at your lowest. Your chest should be about a fists width away from the floor, then back up again.

**20 x Diamond Squats** Your starting position is standing straight, with your feet placed about shoulder length apart. As you begin to bend your knees, imagine you are sitting on a chair. Once your big thigh bone is parallel to the ground, you should stop for one second, then slowly come back up.

**20 x Sit Ups** Lie down on the floor placing your feet either under something that will not move, like a sofa or a bed – or a fun handsome fitness partner – keeping your legs bent at the knees. Place your hands behind your head and lock them together by clasping your fingers. Elevate your upper body so that it creates an imaginary V-shape with your thighs. Breathe out when performing this part of the exercise.

If you're feeling particularly brave, you could add handstand press ups to the routine.

Find wall where there's no furniture against it, and you have at least two metres of space around you. Simply go to do a handstand up against the wall with your back facing it, but have your arms extended so they're taking the weight rather than your neck! This is your starting point. Feeling the pressure already on your arms and shoulders, lower yourself until your head is brushing the floor, then push up again. This is quite advanced in terms of what my column dishes out, so please be careful.

I'd recommend completing each exercise within this circuit three or four times. All you need is body weight, so it's the perfect routine to get you through the holiday season!

Have a merry Christmas and love to you all. ■



## [ask chris]

**Question** How can I tone up my stomach and maybe gain muscle in my bum to make myself feel a little better? I'm not desperate for it to happen right away, but a nice, quick workout would be great. Luke Murphy, via email

**Answer** Quite the specific results you want there! There's not many quick fixes to tone up your stomach, and especially to gain muscle in your glutes, but try sprinting. When you next go for a jog, find a hill and sprint with all your power up it. Head down and try again, then continue your jog. You can do this at the gym on a treadmill as well, but basically you'll be hitting the cardio session as well as giving your legs and butt a powerful and intense work out. ■

## BLOOM Supercharge Matcha Powder

**This is almost a green tea alternative, and is designed so it can be mixed into cold water to aide overall wellbeing and energy. If you take the powder for ten consecutive days in either a drink or meal, you will notice a significant difference. BLOOM matcha also increases concentration and burns up to 40% more fat than if you're not taking any matcha. It also gives you energy without the coffee spike, which is great before a work out. Want more? It helps fight cancer, as it has high levels of EGCG, and it's superb for boosting the immune system, as it has the highest levels of antioxidants per mg in the world. Oh, and it also promotes younger looking and glowing skin thanks to all the antioxidants. So yeah, safe to say it's a great supplement to add to your diet. If you can get past the fact it tastes like cold tea, that is. ■**

£19.80 for 30 grams, [bloomtea.co.uk](http://bloomtea.co.uk)



## Stepping onto that first rung of the property ladder can be one of the hardest and most challenging experiences we're ever likely to face in our lives. Phil Coupland has just bought a house in Bristol with his partner, and he talks through the pros and cons of owning your own property, and what pitfalls to look out for if you're planing to buy soon

WORDS DAVID DURBAN

"I never saw myself buying a house originally. I was quite content with renting. But once we started looking, I really threw myself into the process. Some of my friends are envious now that I'm a homeowner.

My brother's first reaction was to ask if I had an exit clause. My partner and I have signed a contract to agree that if we do break up, we sell the property and we each get back the money we put in. It's not something we want to think about, but anybody in a situation like this needs to prepare for every outcome.

We were renting a house near to the one we bought, so we already knew the area and what we were looking for. It's good, because I only have a ten minute walk to work.

There were some hidden expenses as we had a survey done before buying the house, which told us that the roof needed some work doing to it, so now we have to pay for that.

Some of the estate agents we encountered didn't seem sure how to act around us, but I think that's because they don't experience a gay couple buying a house that often.

They'd sometimes not be sure if we were friends or boyfriends, and sometimes just felt a bit awkward around us.

The off-putting thing for me was the price and the fact we now can't afford to go travelling for quite a while, as we now have the mortgage to pay for. I like seeing the mortgage going out, in a way, but I'm sure in two years time I won't feel like that anymore.

We fell in love with the first property we saw, but we didn't get it. I'm glad though, because the house we have now is even more perfect. It's important to remember that you might fall in love with the first place you see, but there are lots and lots of properties out there, so it's best to have a proper look around.

In the end, we got a fantastic deal. Our house has four bedrooms on three floors – and a party room! We're very lucky.

I love owning a house, which I never thought I would. We haven't really thought about what the future holds for us, but the whole process was exciting and scary at the same time." ■

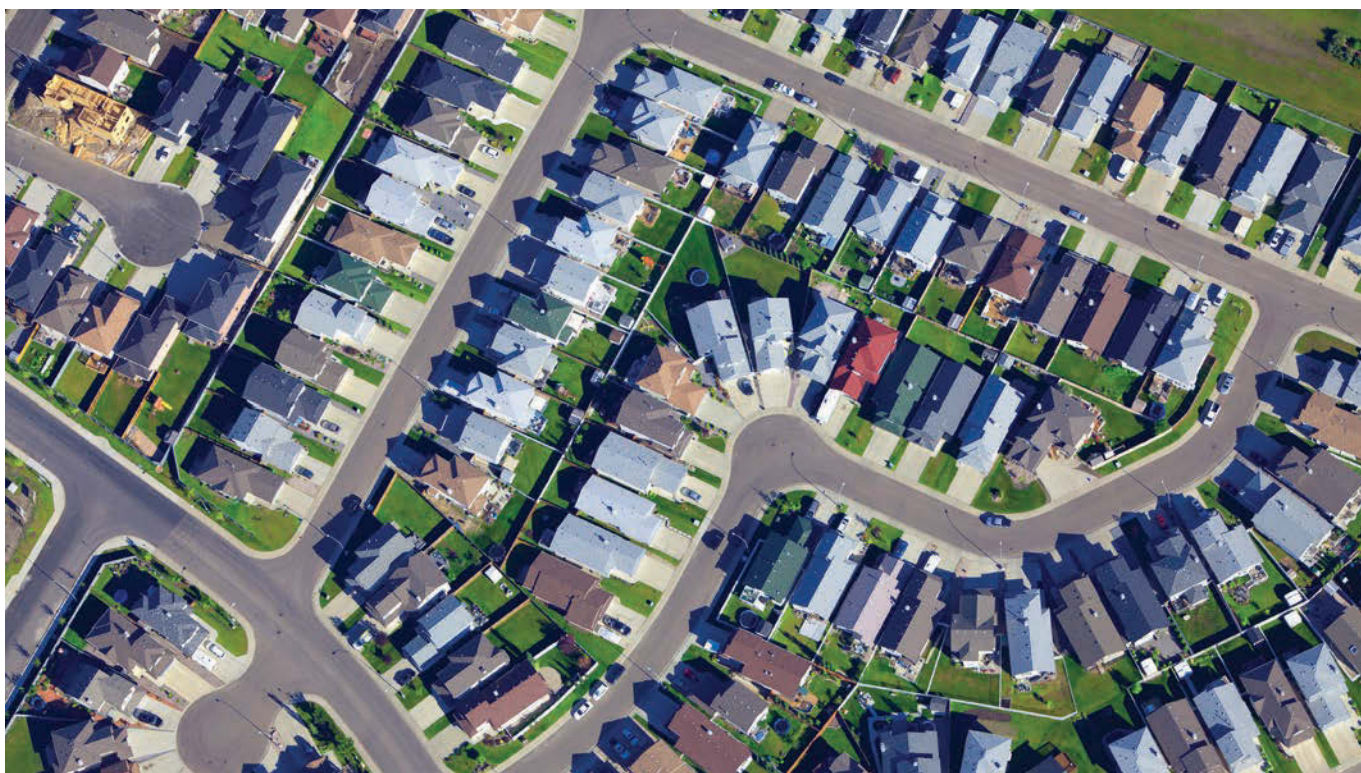




IMAGE: MEGAN TAYLOR



**“** Christmas for us is about traditions and we've been making our own since we first moved in together. Nesters that we are. It starts with the biggest real tree we can fit. Usually taking up most of our sitting room, but so much the better for it. And it has to be a real tree.

Home Alone 2 is also a big part of Christmas for us. Who doesn't want that NYC plaza hotel Christmas? This year, The White Company tapped straight to the core of this fantasy, showing their collection in an ostentatiously beautiful hotel suite. This is the Christmas we want when we grow up.

Our own gentle nod to that are our cherished 'two turtle doves' in white porcelain. Exact replicas of the ones Macaulay shares with the scary bird lady in the film. Thus began our tradition, buying one or two special ornaments each year for our tree to build a collection we can love for many years to come.

Another of our favourites is from Scandinavia, We're in love with the special edition Christmas ornaments at Georg

Jensen. Classic stunners.

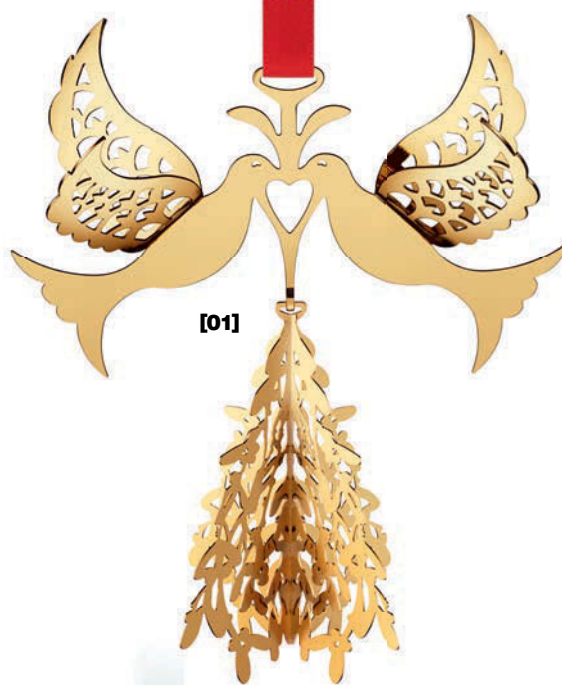
Or, we feed our New York fetish with a trip to Jonathan Adler. His 'menagerie' collection of tree ornaments are all amazing. Our dog Buckley is represented on our tree with Adler's dachshund ornament. And this year's gold horse is our new must-have.

But, if you can't resist your inner geek child, get out your toys from Christmas past and make a wreath out of them. Spray it up in a 'still fabulous' neon shade and you have a wreath to be proud of.

In fact, this is something we'll be using to decorate our dining room. We see the Christmas dinner table as our moment to have loads of fun, whether it be mixed metallics or bold neons. Don't be afraid to mix it up.

If you're looking for fun on your dining table, look no further than Conran, who've nailed the neons with pure style. Or if it's glamour you want, you can't go wrong with a bargainous set of gold cutlery from Argos!

Go forth and make your Christmas lovely. ■



[02]



[03]



[04]



[05]



01 Georg Jensen 2014 Christmas mobile, £49, [georgjensen.com](http://georgjensen.com)

02 Jonathan Adler, horse ornament, £32

03 Two turtle dove ornaments, ala Home Alone 2, available from Etsy

04 Neon 80s toy wreath, by 2 Lovely Gays

05 Argos, gold cutlery set, £29

**With guests arriving soon, expecting to be entertained, it's time to inject a little style into your kitchen. And also a little fun. It is Christmas, after all**

WORDS MARK KING



[01]



[02]



[04]

# PARTY ON



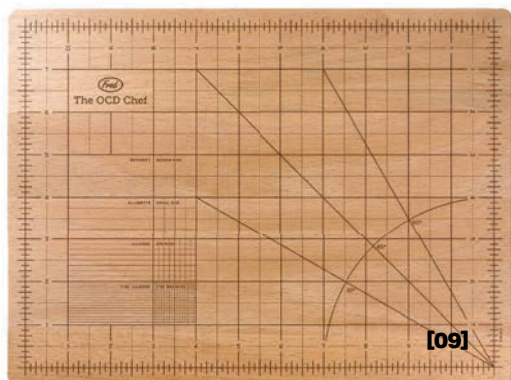
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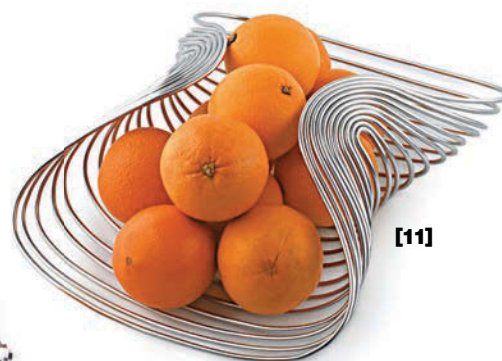
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**01 The ice-breaker**  
Don't dilute those drinks! Chill with frozen granite cubes instead. Sagaform whiskey stones, £12.50, redcandy.co.uk

**02 The Christmas trash**  
Make your bin man smile with a helping of Christmas pud. Christmas Pudding Bin bags, pack of 12, £10, suck.uk.com

**03 The early-bird coffee**  
Enjoy your morning wake-up from a cup that reminds you to tweet about the night before. Tassenset bird in the bush cups, £19.95, trendstyle-online.de

**04 The shot row**  
Easily hand around the vodka shots just as Big Ben strikes. Vodka paddle with glasses, £36, berryred.co.uk

**05 The peace platter**  
Inspire in-law harmony with this yin and yang serving set. Double cheese dish, £141, darwinshome.com

**06 The dining-room classic**  
It's hard to beat the elegant lines of this classic one-litre decanter. Ships Decanter, £48.95, annabeljames.co.uk

**07 The tumbler talking point**  
Edgy glasses that are both fun to hold and almost impossible to knock over. Diamond glass set, £19.49, thegiftoasis.com

**08 The ribbon rack**  
Cope with the influx of extra winter coats with this streamer hanger. Headsprung ribbon coat rack, £69.99, design55online.co.uk

**09 The exacting chef**  
Chop all those crudites as precisely as your OCD demands. Obsessive chef chopping board, £16.99, no1gadgetstore.co.uk

**10 The tradition**  
A Christmas stocking to fill with all those stocking fillers. Christmas stocking sacks, £10 for 12, suck.uk.com

**11 The tangerine tamer**  
Keep your seasonal fruit in check with this eye-catching wire basket. Alessi marli wire fruit holder, £98, redcandy.co.uk

**12 The early reminder**  
Keep track of when you need to start it all over again. Christmas countdown calendar, £20, suck.uk.com

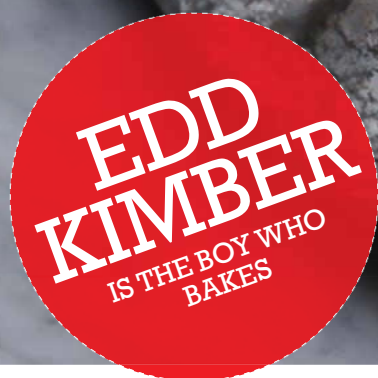


## cosmic christmas

If you're looking for Christmas tree decorations that aren't – well – too Christmassy, then maybe you should look to the stars. Habitat have done just that this season with these vintage-inspired glass planets and glitter starbursts. Paired with their retro robots, they evoke childhood images of another galaxy, so it's too tempting to get down on the floor and play with them rather than hang them on the tree. "Danger, Will Robinson!" ■



Robot baubles, set of three, £15. Planets mini bauble, £6 each. Cosmos star bauble, pack of three, £10, habitat.co.uk



**EDD  
KIMBER**  
IS THE BOY WHO  
BAKES

It's a little rich for me to give you a Christmas recipe as it's probably the time of the year I bake the least. It's not that I don't like Christmas, or don't get involved with the festivities. It's that it's my only time off. I'm more than happy to sit back, enjoy a break and let my family get busy in the kitchen. This recipe, however, is so simple and easy that it could tempt me back if the mince pies have run out and the Quality Street tin is empty!



#### Christmas Stars

-----  
 2 large egg whites  
 1 tsp lemon juice  
 Zest of 1 lemon or orange  
 200g icing sugar  
 250g ground almonds  
 2 tsp ground cinnamon  
 1 tsp ground ginger  
 Pinch of ground cardamom  
 -----

To make the stars, place the egg whites into a large bowl and – using an electric whisk – beat until frothy. Then, add the lemon juice and whisk until the whites form stiff peaks.

Slowly, adding a spoonful at a time, beat in the icing sugar until you have a shiny meringue. Don't worry if it's loose. Pour a quarter of this mixture into a separate bowl and set aside for the moment. Place the remaining ingredients into a separate bowl and mix together to combine. Add the larger portion of meringue and

mix together to form stiff dough. Don't worry if it's a little sticky.

Place the dough onto a piece of parchment paper that's been lightly dusted with icing sugar. Place another sheet of parchment paper on top and then roll out until the dough is about 5mm thick. Peel off the top sheet of parchment and use a star-shaped cookie cutter to cut out as many cookies as possible – if the dough is sticking to the cutter, dipping it into water before cutting will help. Place the stars onto parchment-lined baking trays and, using a pastry brush, top the cookies with the remaining meringue mixture.

Bake in the preheated oven for 12–15 minutes or until the meringue has set but hasn't yet browned. Kept in a sealed container, these cookies will keep for up to two weeks. ■

Author of *The Boy Who Bakes*, *Say It With Cake* and *Patisserie Made Simple*,  
 @theboywhobakes"





**Disaronno** is the drink of Christmas, but now you get to have a designer December with the limited edition Versace bottle. Plus, you can have your very own Showgirls moment with each drink ■

£15, available at all good retailers



#### **Festive Eggnog**

Makes around one litre

**4 free-range egg yolks**

**1/2 cup of caster sugar**

**2 cups of whole milk**

**Pinch of cinnamon**

**1 cup of double cream**

**3 tbs spiced rum**

**1 tsp nutmeg**

**1 tsp vanilla bean paste**

Christmas is one of our favourite times of year. Aside from seeing family and being reunited with friends at home, it's also a great chance to eat, drink and be merry. At our homes, we're the go-to food experts and often get assigned a course to prepare for the feast on Christmas Day.

In the run-up to the big day itself, one particular coffee shop sells eggnog lattes. The name alone is a huge turn off for so many people. However, we've been brave enough to give it a chance and have developed our own version, which is a perfect Yuletide tippie. It's sweet, silky and gives a lovely kick, which mellows over time. We decided to keep measurements in cups, as making this isn't an exact science.

Using a hand mixer or a whisk, beat the egg yolks in a large bowl until they turn light in colour, then gradually add in

the sugar, whisking until fluffy. Leave to one side.

In a saucepan, combine the milk and cinnamon and heat until warm and steamy. Don't bring to a boil or the mixture is ruined.

Now it's time to introduce the hot milk to the eggs. This process is known as tempering, and it avoids the egg mixture scrambling. Slowly, add a third of the hot milk to the egg mixture, whisking it vigorously until it becomes smooth and loose.

Then pour the egg mixture back into the saucepan. Increase to a medium heat, constantly stirring until the everything begins to thicken, taking care not to boil. You'll know it's done when it coats the back of a wooden spoon. Then, if you run your finger across it, the mix will not run. If you accidentally do boil the mixture, it'll curdle, but sometimes it can be saved by running it through a blender.

Remove from the heat and stir in the cream. Leave to cool at room temperature for about an hour.

Then, mix in the vanilla, nutmeg and add in the spiced rum. Best served chilled. If you're feeling merry, feel free to add a bit of extra rum. Bourbon or brandy also works a treat. ■

Gastro Gays are Patrick Hanlon and Russell Alford. For more visit [gastrogays.com](http://gastrogays.com), @gastrogays

[12/14]

# modern family



**Snug as a pug in a rug** Cosying up by the fire is one of the charms of Christmas. And it's not just humans who like it – now your dog can too. These faux-fur blankets are rich and luxuriant, and backed in super-soft anti-pil fleece. As if we weren't already jealous of our pets...

From £60, Rooi.com

## Christmas? Crumbs!

Mince pie on your clean carpet? Gone in seconds with the ridiculously lightweight Vax Air Cordless. And yes, that's cordless as in you can clean your whole home for 50 minutes without a plug. That means the annual festive party is tidied before

your guests have even got home, and you don't have to face Christmas crumbs on Boxing Day. Plus, the swivel and turn feature is pretty cool. Yes, we know, we're getting middle-aged. And loving it. £299, major retailers and [vax.co.uk](http://vax.co.uk) ■







## RORY & NICK GAY BIRTHRIGHT



**We're Rory and Nick.**

A devoted couple who've been together for more than two years. Since our earliest conversations together, we've expressed our desire to become fathers, to fulfil the natural desire to pass on our genes and experience the joys of parenthood. We feel that time has arrived for us.

We believe, like heterosexual couples who face the pain of infertility, same-sex couples have the right to become parents. Unfortunately, the same opportunities aren't afforded to gay couples as those for heterosexual or lesbian couples. UK law also fails to protect the intended parents, which has led us to look abroad.

We know we're not the first gay couple to walk this path. Something we believe in is ethical and legitimate surrogacy. Anything else isn't a valid basis under which to bring new life into this world. We're not prepared to exploit surrogates and legal

loopholes in developing nations.

The purpose of our gay birthright UK campaign is two fold. Firstly, we intend to raise awareness and open a debate regarding the laws surrounding surrogacy and bring parity in terms of availability of IVF and fertility treatment.

We understand this is a long-term challenge, so our intention is to begin this process now through the medium of gestational surrogacy overseas. As a gay couple, we've the same potential and intention to parent as any other couple, but the state does not support us in terms of treatment and law, so we've found a route to follow that will circumvent these inequalities.

The second intention of our gay birthright UK campaign is to seek donations to help us towards our goal. We're far from millionaires, but we're determined to make this a reality. We hope you can help us on this mission. ■

Follow Rory and Nick's journey at [fertilityroad.com](http://fertilityroad.com)



**Christmas with the cats** As if having to watch the humans eat the rest of the year wasn't tough enough, there's now a whole season built around human scoffing. Well there's good news for those pets suffering from chronic food envy: Christmas dinner, for animals. How did this not already exist? The Pets Pyjamas Christmas dinners come in a personalised treat box, including toys and, yes, an edible pet Christmas card. Oh, and a turkey. We might start pestering THEM for food every hour now... ■ [PetsPyjamas.com](http://PetsPyjamas.com), £22.49

**CHOCCY WOCCY DOODAH**

There are three highlights to the whole nuptials thing, the drunken disco, and the cake. It can be tough to get it right – you want something that blows the guests away. Well, good news. Like many things, Brighton has the answer, in bespoke cake makers and chocolatiers Choccywoccydoodah. This group of kooky cooks can seemingly make anything. They do chocolates and cakes with such detail and extravagance that you'd think they're being put on the fourth plinth in Trafalgar Square. They're probably the best chocolate shop in Britain. Prices depend on order, [choccywoccydoodah.com](http://choccywoccydoodah.com) ■



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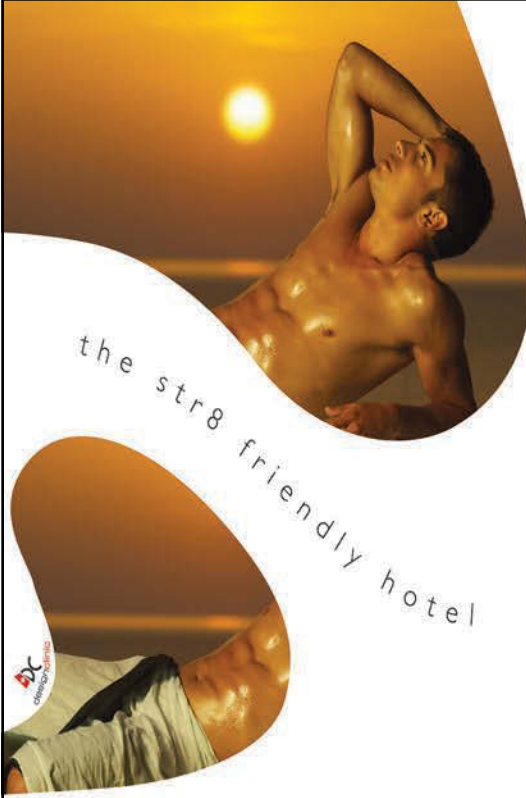
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**Deadline for next issue 2 December**

## CLASSIFIED FEATURE

### PACE



**PACE GROUPS FOR GAY/BI MEN – SOMETHING TO FEEL PRIDE ABOUT, SOMETHING TO FIGHT FOR.**

Late last year, London councils made the decision not to fund HIV-prevention group work services for gay/bi men across London; although their own needs assessment did recognise the transformative nature of therapeutic group work.

The loss of these programmes isn't new news, but as PACE prepares its final report for the programme, it's important to publicise what's happened. The London councils' decision has created a huge gap in therapeutic services for gay and bi men in London.

PACE has run groups: for men who are just coming out, men in their 20s, Black and Asian men and those living with HIV. They are about creating bonds and a sense of community, with a focus on self-esteem, communication and relationship building.

Since it was developed in 1995, the programme has reached over 3,000 men. Typical feedback speaks for itself:

"I am amazed at how I managed to achieve all the personal goals that I set myself."

"The most effective part for me was being part of something special and not feeling alone, also making new friends."

"I have definitely made progress on my self-acceptance; I am now more comfortable about being open with my sexuality."

"This has given me the confidence to be in control of having safer sex!"

"It's great to be able to talk openly and engage freely with other positive gay men. Please offer more of these invaluable spaces, it's bloody hard in London!"

"The least effective thing about the group is that the project has to come to an end! Hope you manage to keep it going somehow..."

The levels of HIV in men who have sex with men (MSM) have increased since 2011 and now MSM have the highest number of new infections compared to other men. Source: THT - Facts-and-statistics-about-HIV/Men-who-have-sex-with-men.

PACE are committed to maintaining our support for gay/bi men. We are currently pursuing alternative sources of funding to continue a group work programme.

PACE still offers Healthy Relationship Workshops, counselling and relationship counselling in London and online nationally. See **pacehealth.org** for details. Call, email or come to PACE and talk it through. Info and enquiries **020 7700 1323** or Email: **info@pacehealth.org.uk**





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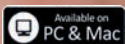
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